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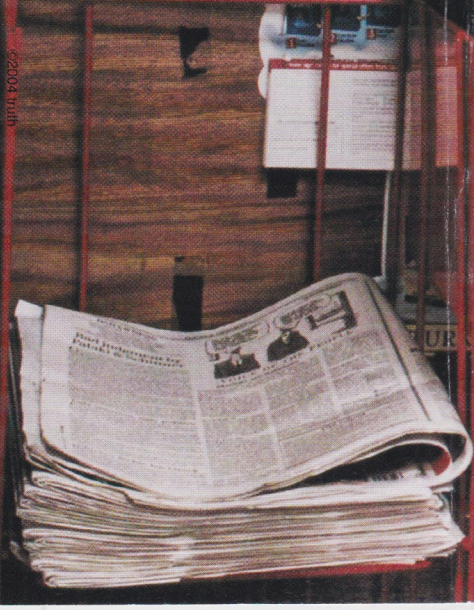
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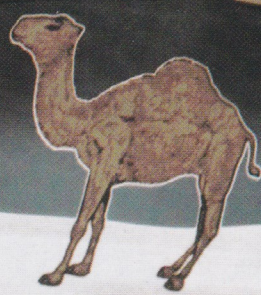
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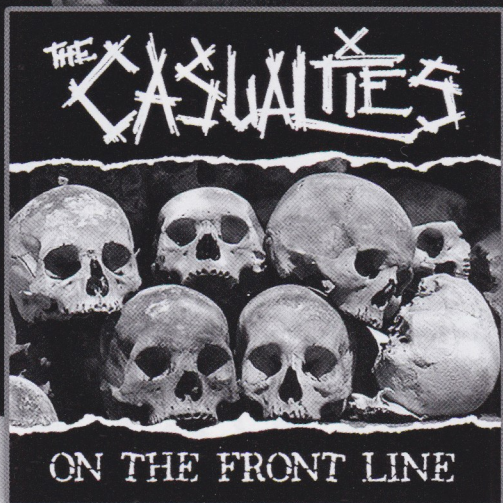
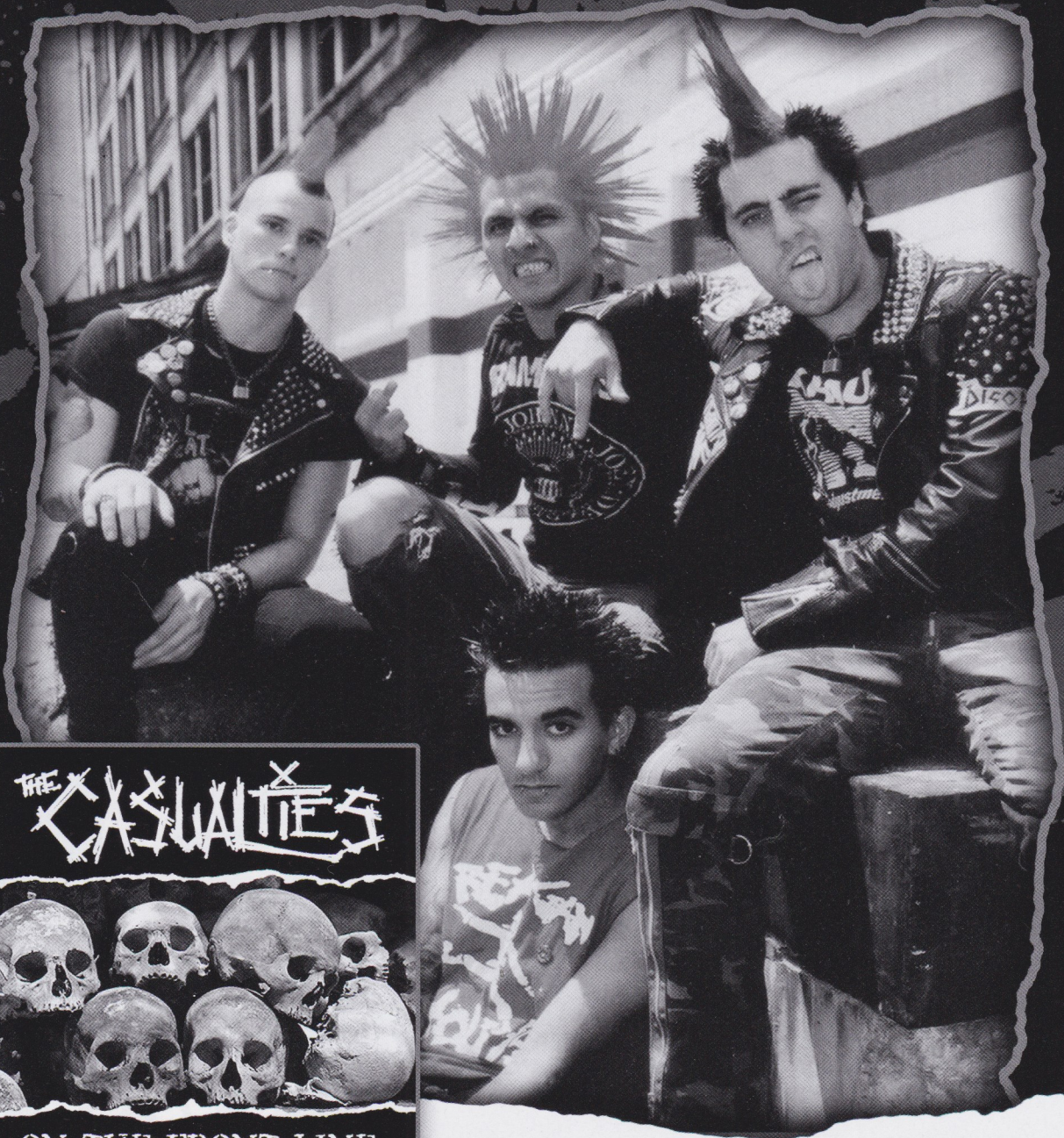
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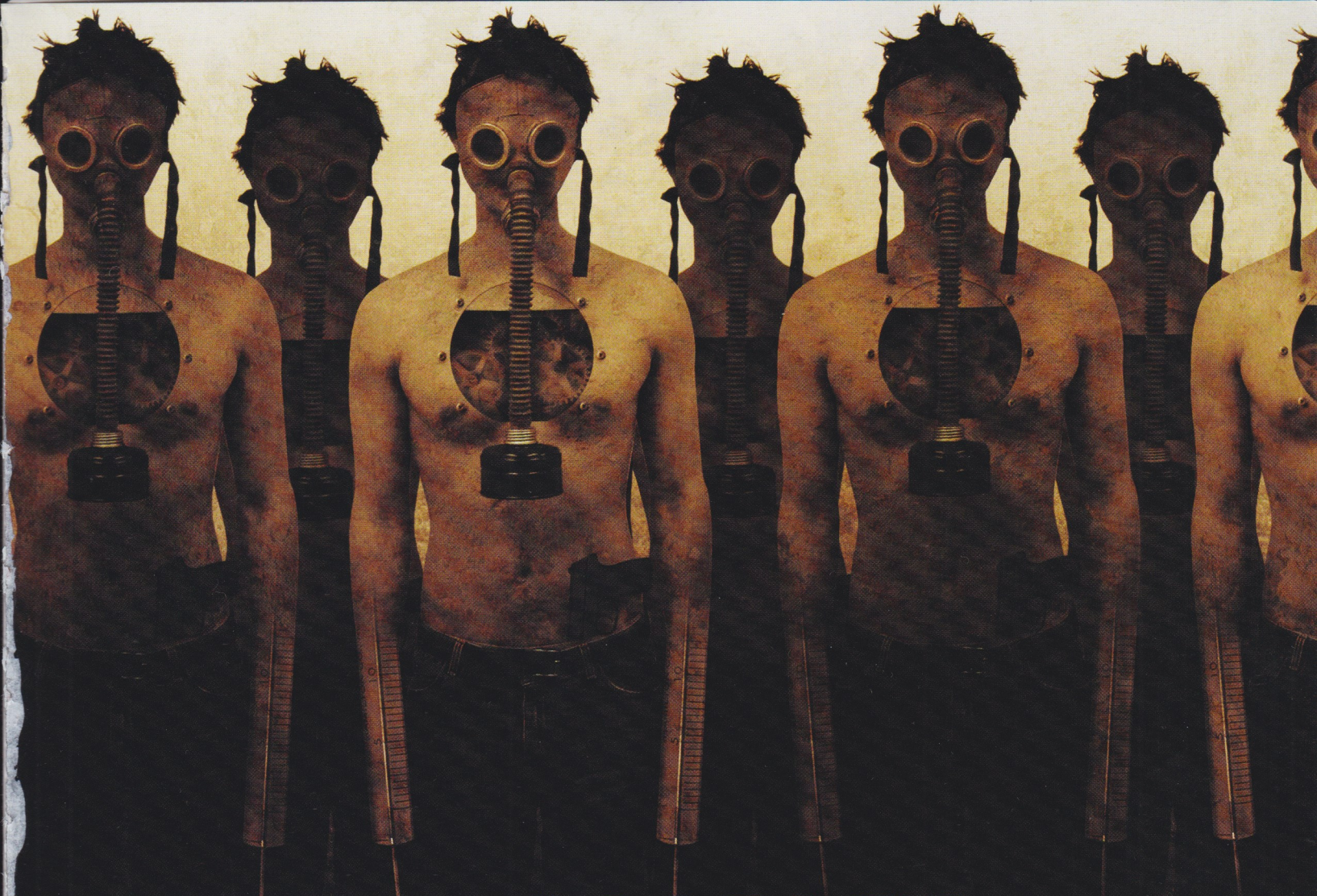
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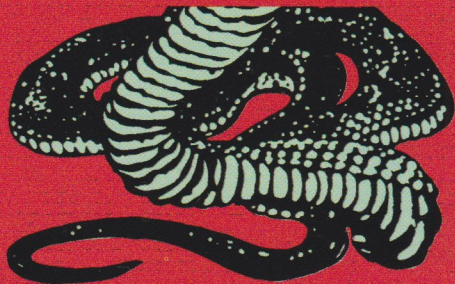
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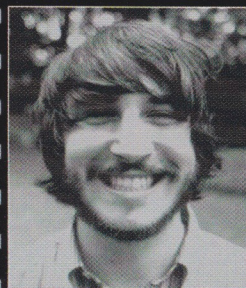
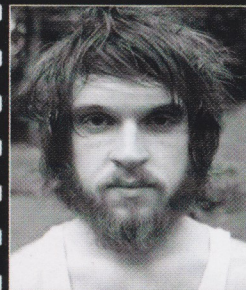
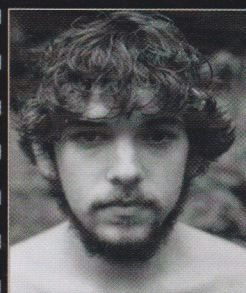
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# LAW OF INERTIA

## Issue #17

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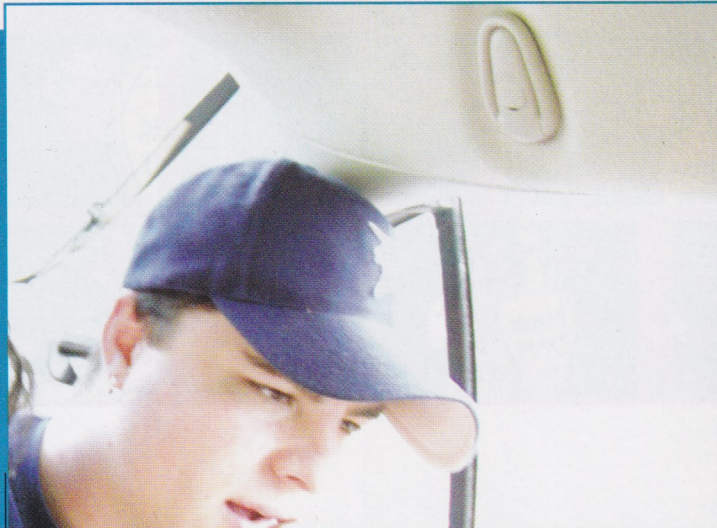
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## Mr. Ed.

Welcome to another frost-bitten, icy-cold, sub-zero issue of *Law of Inertia*. This issue we come direct from the great white northern state of New York, where the temperature is currently hovering a little over 11 degrees (with wind-chill, I'm told it feels like -2 degrees). The heat doesn't work in our office and I'm sitting here typing this with gloves and a jacket on, so excuse me if my chattering teeth prevent me from exercising proper grammar in this editor's note.

Sitting here on fun-filled nights like these, I'm reminded of a story that happened to me when I was a wee lad of 15 summers. I was on an Outdoor Education trip a teacher at my school had planned. Myself, and a group of 10 other unsuspecting teenagers were to travel from San Francisco—where I grew up—to the frosty peaks of Lake Tahoe to spend the weekend cross-country skiing. Now, at the time I was much more partial to the burgeoning snowboarding scene of Tahoe than the backcountry style of skiing that gave one more of a workout than a speedy rush. However, I was always up for trying new things so I strapped on my gators and started pushing myself down the snowy trail.

About 4 and a half hours into the trip—after my walkman, playing Heart's first album if memory serves, ran out of batteries and I was left with the only sound in my ears being the bitter wind—I skied up to some of my fellow students and happened upon a close friend of mine who sprained his ankle and fallen asleep in the snow. Our guide told us we needed to get him to the cabin where we'd spend the night immediately as he was showing signs of hypothermia. Great. A 5'11" Yugoslavian kid sprains his ankle on the side of a mountain and we have to pull him to safety. Easier said than done.

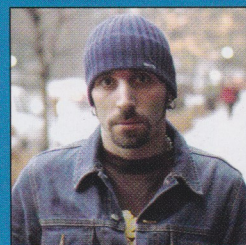
Needless to say, we made it to the cabin about 30 minutes later and pulled our downed friend inside. He was going into shock from having been dragged through snow for the past half an hour, his down parka resembling a sopping wet towel. Our guide instructed us to strip him of all his wet clothes (i.e. *all* his clothes) and get him in a sleeping bag. He then pointed to me, being the smallest and least helpful person, and told me to take off my clothes as well. Not knowing what I would soon be asked to do, I immediately did as I was commanded. Now I was in my boxers and my friend was naked in a sleeping bag shivering like a flag in a hurricane. I understood without being told that my job was to jump in the sleeping bag with my friend, hug him until my body heat transferred to him and brought him back to a normal temperature.

An hour later the group of us were laughing about this incident. Our friend was 90% better and cracking jokes. His skin no longer felt like a sno-cone, so I would say, "Hey, move your arm," to which he would respond, "That's not my arm." We'd burst out into fits of laughter until the next person had a joke to better the one before it.

Anyway, I think someone might have to rescue me from hypothermia if I sit here one minute longer. So, I'm going to get up and go to the post office to mail in this new issue. Hope you like it.

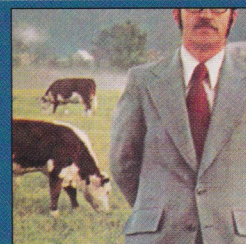
Ross Siegel  
Editor In Chief

## CONTRIBUTORS



### Kevin Weinstein: Contributing Photographer

This handsome devil has one fear in this cold cold world. Like many hot gay Chicago men who originally hail from San Francisco, Mr. Weinstein's greatest fear is that he will grow old alone without any pot. Fortunately, he has two new chihuahua puppies and a constant flow of ganja to keep him warm at night. When not speaking a bit of conversational Hebrew, he takes pictures of the Alkaline Trio for *Law of Inertia*.



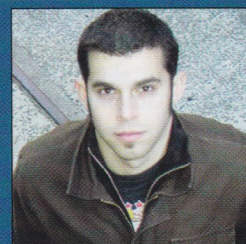
### HARVEY: Cover Designer

Harvey is a very strange entity indeed. He writes us e-mails that aren't for us, then sends us graphics files in strange, arcane formats. Harvey often drives us crazy, but he is so loveable (and such a good designer) that we forgive him with open arms. Considering what a renaissance man he is—Harvey speaks German and Dutch, plays futbol and baseball effortlessly, and enjoys kissing his Great Aunt Martha—we don't stay mad at Harvey for long.



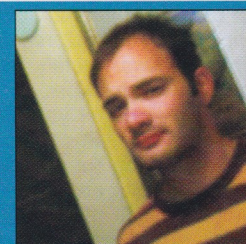
### Bryan Sheffield: Contributing Photographer

Mr. Sheffield is a great photographer. No seriously, he is. He managed to make a bunch of golfers in the Golf Punk photo-spread look great, even though no one in their right mind actually golfs at night. Bryan has totally set the Los Angeles golf photography scene on fire. His photos of Tiger Wolf are legendary and he makes a mean Arnold Palmer as well. Bryan's photos are so amazing that we overlook the fact that he's not really from L.A.—he's really from Jersey!



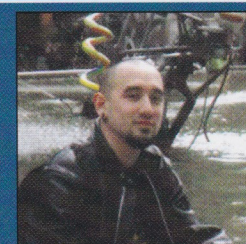
### Ronen Kaufman: Contributing Writer

Ronen is a good looking kid, no doubt about it. That's good 'cause he's the frontman of a grindcore outfit called Zombie Apocalypse who are the type of band that could use all the good-lookingness they can get. Mr. Kaufman used to sing for Try Fail Try, a band he swears started the Jersey style of metalcore that Dillinger Escape Plan is making mad duckets from. He swears Try Fail Try were pioneers. We're not sure. We do know, however, that Ronen is dope.



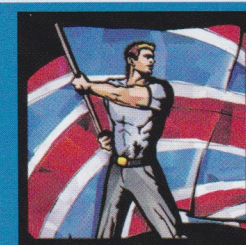
### Matt Tomich: Contributing Writer

Matt is the only person we know from the South who doesn't just sit around eating pulled pork and drinking mint juleps all day. Instead, when we went to visit him in Chapel Hill, NC he played soccer with his team and went swimming (to stay in shape, not for recreation). All this fitness makes us tired, but it might be the secret for Matt's awesome stage-jumps when playing with his former bands, Sorry About Dresden and The Scaries. Who knows?



### Brandon Geist: Contributing Writer

We were looking for someone to write an article on Bleeding Through. We said to a guy named Jerry, "Yo Jerry, you know anyone who would want to write for us?" Jerry said he did. Brandon contacted us. We said, "Yo Brandon, can you speak any other languages?" "Why yes I can," he replied. "seven phrases in Russian; eight phrases in Chinese; some Spanish, mostly regarding food; some German (mostly Rammstein songs)." We hired him.



### Neil Jamieson: Contributing Illustrator

The invasion is on, British that is. Ali G, Banksy, and the UK Air Guitar Championships have all graced *Law of Inertia's* pages in the last few issues. Now you can get your British fix with the illustrations of Neil Jamieson. In this issue his work can be found accompanying "The Status of Gay." His day job is illustrating for *Sports Illustrated* and for some reason he decided to work for us for a measly stipend of one pint a week. Blimey!



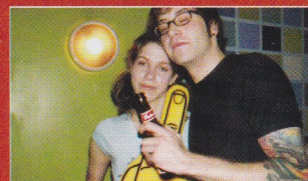
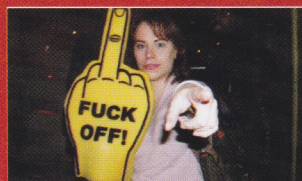
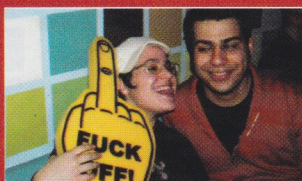
# P

# arty

On December 12th, 2003...

Law of Inertia hosted its first annual Holiday party at Drinkland in New York City (Ipecac Recordings co-hosted the debauchery).

Check [www.lawofinertia.com](http://www.lawofinertia.com) for listings of future events. For now, see what you missed.



# L

# ETTERS

## THE BEST AROUND

Issue #16 was so good. I think it probably makes your mag the best one around. The writing is great, the bands you choose to cover are always top-notch, the design is cool, and the little paragraphs about your contributors makes your magazine feel more like a club and less like a corporate ogre than most other music magazines out there.

I have to say, the Diary Of A Sadman piece on Ozzy Osbourne was so funny I almost peed my pants. "See through space and time..." that is some funny stuff. Which brings me to my next point: the non-musical articles in *Law of Inertia* are easily as good as the musical ones. While other magazines think an idea of a non-musical feature is "What Does Chris Carrabba Have In His iPod?" you guys actually have something interesting and hilarious to say. So bravo and kudos.

I'm a design major at Art Center in Southern California and I would love to come work for you when I graduate. Got any room for me?

Sincerely,  
Sarah Blum

p.s. Were those lines of cocaine in the Air Guitar piece real?

Dear Sarah,

We are pleased to report that the lines of cocaine in the Air Guitar piece were about as real as rhinestones. So no, Jake Futernick reports from the front lines that the bag of powdery white stuff was merely our used to intimidate competitors in the event. Apparently it didn't work.

Anyway, thanks for the comments. That's very sweet of you. We always need all the support we can get 'cause sometimes we sit in our corporate headquarters on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Manhattan looking out over our spacious view of Central Park from our corner offices (four editors, four corner offices... all view Central Park. Go figure.) and finish counting our piles of money before we start to wonder if anyone likes what it is we do at *Law of Inertia* or if they merely buy our magazine because it is the cool thing to do, and really do not appreciate all the time and energy we put into making *Law of Inertia* a reality. Then, after our secretaries who look like they came fresh from the set of another magazine's swimsuit issue, rub our backs and feed us peeled grapes, we sigh and realize that we have pleased yet another fan. This time in the form of an art student from L.A.

Good job team.

p.s. You're hired!

## POSTAL BLUES

Was the letter in your last issue real or did you guys write it in hopes that we'd find it cool. It wasn't.

Letters are for suckers,  
P. Mackey

Dear P-Mack,

One day this fall, *Law of Inertia's* Music Editor and Publisher, Aaron Lefkove and Ross Siegel respectively, were walking down the street when Ross pulled out a letter he had gotten in the mail. The letter, handwritten on loose-leaf paper, was very strange and curious, so of course Ross asked Aaron—the most strange and curious person he knows—if he wrote it

himself and sent it into *Law of Inertia* in the hopes of pulling off an elaborate hoax just for kicks. He said he did not. The only choice the two had was to transcribe the letter and have Aaron answer the kid's questions in our next issue. So, you see that the letter in question in issue #16 was in fact real. We would love to know who the hell sent it.

## FRESH FEMMES

Are you aware that your magazine features very few women and has very few women writers?

Jill Penton  
El Paso, TX

Dear Jill,

Wow, we weren't aware there were feminists in Texas. Before your note we thought all feminists lived north of the Mason-Dixon line, a scary longitude where Waffle Houses, Family Dollars, and Bob Evans are rare. Apparently they do and we're glad you're kicking.

So, yeah, you're right. We have a problem. We don't write about enough women because, well, the bands we tend to like just don't have female members. It's not that we're on a crusade to keep the female gender down. Instead, we're fully aware of the problem and would like to see it change. Unfortunately much of the music we cover happens to be of the aggressive guitar sort, and, well, there just aren't too many bands we dig that have outspoken females in them.

We do, however, want to broaden our horizons and feature more female photographers in our Flash! Flash! Flash! section, as well as work with more female writers. So, if you or someone you know is an awesome, ambitious music journalist and happens to not wield a penis, please send them over.

## BOY ON FIRE

Someone told me that Boy Sets Fire are going to break up. Is this true? Can you help stop it? They're the best band around!  
[xdrunkinjunx@\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.com](mailto:xdrunkinjunx@*****.com)

Are you kidding? You're writing us just to ask if your favorite band broke up? With the invention of the internet it's quite easy to check on your favorite rockstars and the bands that earn them fat paychecks. How hard would it have been to first check out Lambgoat.com, then go to the Wind-up Records site (or maybe the Victory site), and as a last resort call the band's publicist and ask them? But noooooo, you had to take time out of your busy schedule to disturb our busy schedules with this inane bullshit. Can't you see I'm busy working on my biceps and reading *The Wall Street Journal*?

Okay, since you made me stop my work-out I'll tell you this. I have no idea about the status of Boy Sets Fire. But I sure as hell won't help you prevent them from breaking up. In fact, if it'll give me 15 more minutes of sleep each morning then I sure hope they're gone for good.

For the record, Boy Sets Fire is still together... for the time being. Now, back to my double-chai tea latte.

Please direct all letters to [letters@lawofinertia.com](mailto:letters@lawofinertia.com). Note: all letters, e-mails, or telegrams sent to *Law of Inertia* become property of *Law of Inertia* and can and will be used against you in a court of law.

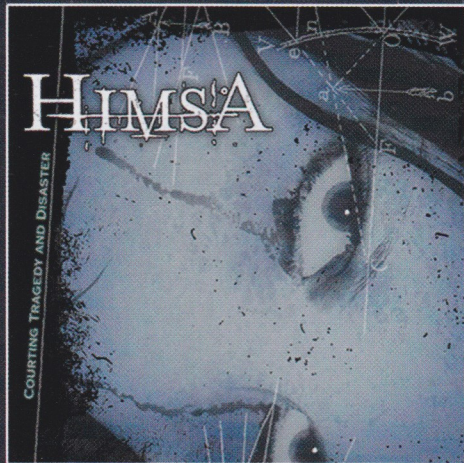


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THRASH, IT MATTERS NOT WHEN IT COMES  
TO PRESENT DAY HIMSA, FOR THE DIVIDES  
BETWEEN METAL & HARDCORE ARE SCOFFED  
AT AS SIMPERING SEMANTICS"

-METAL MANIACS



## lamb of god

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BURN

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(Strapping Young Lad)

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good ideas, ideas perfectly arranged into  
accessible yet hardly commercial music."

-Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles (9/10)



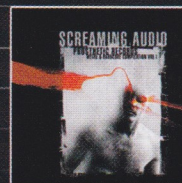
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# LOUD & FAST Forever

tattoos that wail

If music is the soundtrack to life, then art is the tool that lets us visualize it. Behind the whirlwind of riffs and wreckage onstage, there are talented souls whose skills are gathered to bring the visions of your favorite rockers to life. With canvases ranging from CD covers to t-shirts to bodies themselves, these are the artists that create the scene behind the scenes.

With a fresh new millennium safely in place, free from the fears of apocalyptic fallout and Y2K computer frenzy, February of 2000 marked a beginning of another kind. The chilly landscape of Syracuse, NY, home of Halo Tattoo, provided a birthplace for an already talented and accomplished artist as Grez began his journey into tattooing with a silly skull tat.

Interested in collecting tattoos from the early age of 16, Grez found himself both getting tattooed and drawing tattoos for friends. Grez explains: "Since I was an artist according to my friends, plus a brief—but to them, extensive—knowledge of tattooing, they would put two and two together and ask me to draw tattoos for them. So it began. I was no longer just a client. By drawing tattoos I became a step in the process which started the wheels turning." Within a few short years, Syracuse would become known as a tattoo haven for hardcore fanatics and local college kids alike as Halo Tattoos was open for business on a popular thoroughfare.

A steady fixture in the shop, Grez found himself more and more involved in the world

## GREZ:

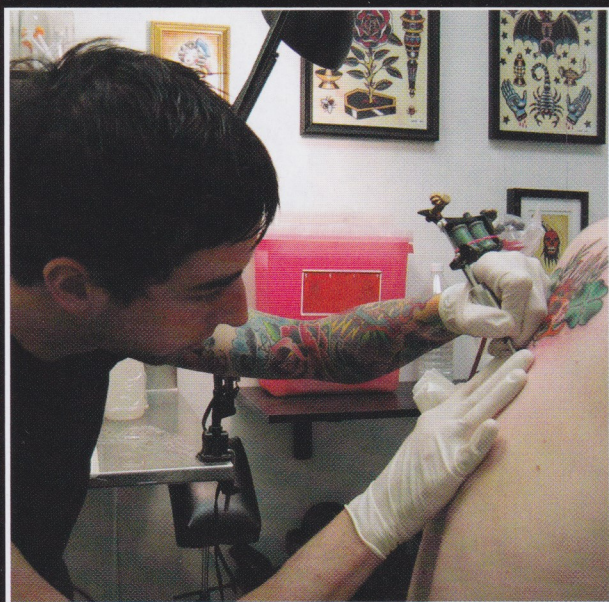
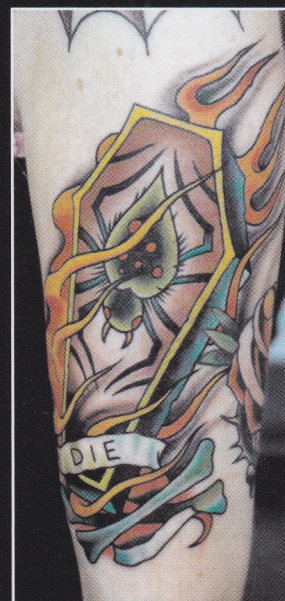
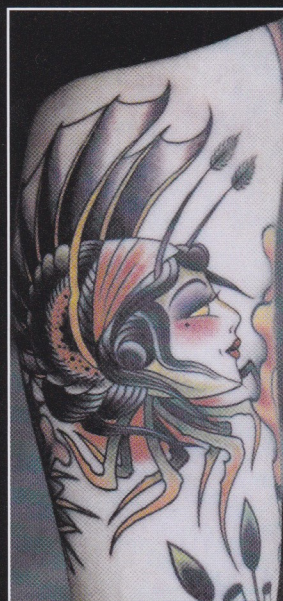
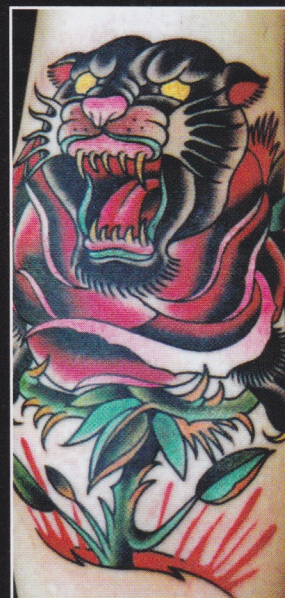
of tattooing. "Instead of wasting my time hanging out at a shop, I got an offer to start a career hanging out at a shop. Ron [aka King Ron DNA, one of Halo's owners], asked me if I had ever considered learning how to tattoo. I quickly responded with a yes and that's where the offer was made for an apprenticeship." After graduating from College where he studied Ceramics and Painting, Grez put his lawn mowing skills to the test, working for five months as a landscaper to save money for the year long apprenticeship ahead of him.

Grez instantly turned heads and raised eyebrows with his unique aesthetic. Quickly combining his existing insight into line and space gathered from ceramics and painting with the bold and colorful art of today's foremost tattoo talents, people took notice. With a powerful drive combined for a respectful take on past traditions of tattooing and tattooers, progress was visible to peers in leaps and bounds. "Having strong roots is important. How can you bring anything new to the table if you don't know what's been done before? I believe it's a duty to build upon this legacy."

Hitting the scene with his stunning skills, Grez's love for music made him a shoe-in for lending a hand to art-needy bands Most Precious Blood and Until the End, and hardworking labels such as Deathwish, Indecision, and Bridge Nine. "Music for me has a direct relation to my moods, just as my work does. I honestly don't think I could get through a day of tattooing without it. It's kind of like an automatic pilot for me." From the needle to the paintbrush, you can find Grez's art on the limbs and torsos of rockers you love, CD covers, posters, and T-Shirts from Hatebreed and Converge to Kitty and Hope Conspiracy. Finding the similarity between visual art and music an inspiration, the artist is fascinated with the importance of the human connection. "A tiny journey into their head, hearing or seeing what the artist wants to talk about... those times when you hear or see an artist talking about something and finding a connection and relation to them. Understanding what they're saying without it being spelled out."

In the future, Grez plans to keep pushing the envelope. Hoping to bring something new to the world of tattooing and expanding his own visual vocabulary, the artist successfully avoids feeling content while constantly forging ahead. "I never want to reach a comfort zone. I don't believe I ever will. I always hate 95% of my work, which pushes me harder. By the time this article comes out, I'm sure I'll hate absolutely everything in here. Trying to do every piece better than the last. Grow as an artist and a human. What more could you ask for?"

Currently, you can find Grez needling maniacally at Redemption Tattoo in Cambridge, MA. His work is available for your viewing pleasure online at [www.RedemptionTattoo.com](http://www.RedemptionTattoo.com)

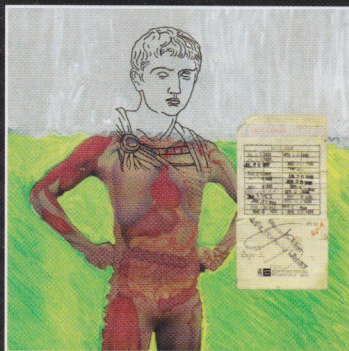






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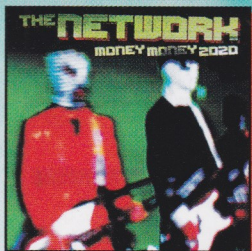
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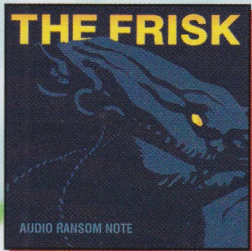
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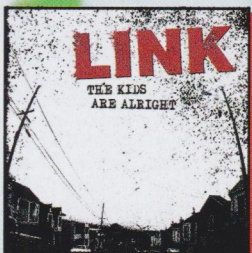
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# BOTCH

## FAMILY TREE



### BOTCH

Botch led the wave of metalcore bands coming out of the Pacific Northwest in the latter half of the '90's with their unique blend of hardcore brutality, guitar mastery, and time signatures that would give mathematicians a headache. After their demise the various members went on to a number of other projects, none of which resemble their former band.



### MINUS THE BEAR

**ALBUM:** *Highly Refined Pirates* (Suicide Squeeze)  
**ALUMNUS:** Dave Knudson (Guitar)

**PICTURE THIS:** Don't expect the fierce guitar assault once found in spades in Knudson's previous band. In fact, there's not a distorted guitar tone to be found at all in any of the group's sharp and catchy melodic rock tunes.



### THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES

**ALBUM:** *This Is Meant To Hurt You* (Jade Tree)  
**ALUMNUS:** Brian Cook (Bass/Synth)

**PICTURE THIS:** Formed out of the ashes of Kill Sadie, Botch, and Nineironspitfire, These Arms Are Snakes blend influences from all their previous projects and then some into an onslaught of angular post-punk aggression.



### ROY

**ALBUM:** *Big City Sin And Small Town Redemption* (Fueled By Ramen)

**ALUMNI:** Brian Cook (Guitar), Dave Verellen (Drums)

**PICTURE THIS:** With former Botch frontman Dave Verellen behind the drum kit and Brian Cook on bass, Roy pump out some of the most melodic country tinged indie rock this side of Built To Spill.



## APOLLO SUNSHINE

### BOSTON UN-COMMON

Coincidence struck on a late Friday night as I drove into Boston. I was supposed to interview Apollo Sunshine in a few days, but WFNX, Boston's alternative station, had beaten me to it. Bassist/vocalist Jesse Gallagher, guitarist Sam Cohen, and drummer Jeremy Black were introducing their new single, "I Was On The Moon" with a bright acoustic rendition. It was futile. Radio travels faster than print, and word of Apollo Sunshine has spread far and wide around Boston. When I called Gallagher on Halloween, I hoped he wasn't all talked out, "I'm just going to get a cardboard box. And if I can find a leaf blower, I was thinking of making a dickhole with the leafblower in it—stuff it with fake money— and walk into the room shooting money out of my ATM dick." Gallagher was still up for conversation.

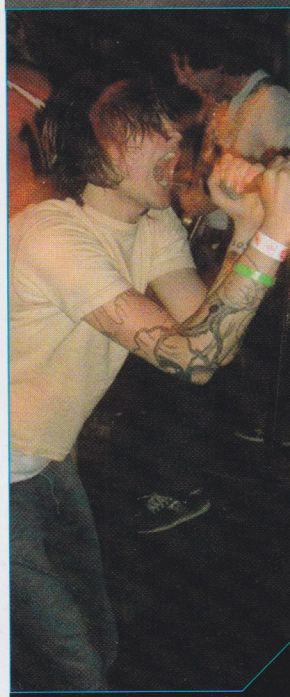
The trio formed loosely around common friends at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. But while Cohen and

Black finished their degrees, Gallagher opted to pursue music from a less epistemological place. "I was writing way cooler songs [before Berklee] and suddenly I had to learn about all this shit I didn't care about. I didn't even have time to write songs anymore. I majored in songwriting and they were teaching me how to put songs to Mariah Carey." That's most likely why their new album *Katonah* sounds nothing like Mariah Carey and more like the bouncy irreverence of Ben Folds with waves of juicy instrumental layering. It was recorded in a barn in Katonah, NY, which probably accounts for the title. "Our drummer has hippie, musical parents, and they live in this house in a dense forest. They have this barn, and it's kind of beat up with holes in it and birds living in it. We went up there with ten or fifteen friends and totally renovated it [with] new floors, new walls, a loft we can sleep in, and that's where we lived for a couple of months. It was

a good time."

Apollo Sunshine is all about having a good time. The boys are notorious for turning a loose crowd of apathetic wallflowers into a rollicking free for all. They do it by giving the people what they want. "We ended up learning 'Remix The Ignition' by R. Kelly. We play 'Freebird' kinda frequently, but it's at the point where you just fuck around with it and make it really funny. We ask the crowd what style they want it in. Sometimes they yell out 'silly as shit,' or 'make it funky.'"

While their album continues to climb and radio keeps them in rotation the band has been in a touring lull. Possibly they're taking a private moment after spending months in a barn and then more months in a van. "It's funny, after the show the other night we had a week off, and the next day John and James [the road crew] call me up and say, 'Hey dude, you wanna get drunk?'" [Jon Stern]



## DAUGHTERS

### DEFY ALL LOGIC

Moving units, buyouts, riders, development deals and "indie credibility." These terms are worming their way into the vernacular of the independent music scene. Whereas the movement's pride was based on its anti-establishment values and being "different," the indie scene is becoming as business-oriented as the mainstream. When profit seems to drive the labels, it's hard to imagine music that is still played for fun. Then comes Daughters, a five-piece from Rhode Island with song titles like, "Pants, Meet Shit" and "I Don't Give A Shit About Wood, I'm Not A Chemist." These five, who prefer to remain nameless, aren't looking for mainstream success. "Fuck the critics. Everyone has something bad to say about everyone," says the lanky singer.

Before forming Daughters, three of the band's members were in As The Sun Sets. Despite ATSS's lack of success, they had a name people knew. This helped boost Daughters' popularity, even before the first seven-inch dropped. Though Daughters may be selling more records and opening more tours because of their

connection with As The Sun Sets, their vocalist quips their success is based on, "A combination of talent and sheer good looks. We are much better than [ATSS] and I am much better looking than their singer."

Soon after the release of their 11-minute long "full" length album, numerous record reviews dismissed Daughters as little more than a "gimmick band." Not known for his modesty (he's felled microphones onstage), the singer says, "Clearly those people don't know what they're talking about. Granted, some of our songs may not be that good, but you pay ten dollars and you get to look at me. What more could you ask for?"

Their plans for the future would be one thing. Most likely it holds more successful tours (like the one last summer with hardcore bands Give Up The Ghost and Most Precious Blood) during which they can incorporate their number one goal: "We want to bring the sex! Bringing eroticism to shows is what we want." [Ray Harkins]

<photos> Botch: Jason Hellman; Minus The Bear: Dan Monick; Apollo Sunshine: Bryan Sheffield; Daughters: Cody DeLong



# long since forgotten

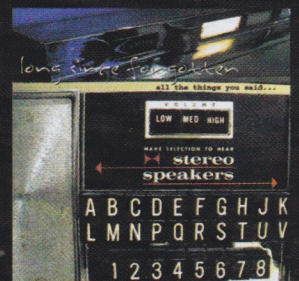
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# BLACK & WHITE RED ALL OVER



## BLOOD RED

**FROM:** Long Island, NY

**ALBUM:** *The Whole Disease* (Initial)

**PICTURE THIS:** Former members of the great LI hardcore progenitors, Silent Majority and Inside, Blood Red combines a love of melodic hardcore with the more ethereal sounds of early U2 rock (they get their name from the U2 album, *Under A Blood Red Sky*).



## THE RED CHORD

**FROM:** Revere, MA

**ALBUM:** *Fused Together In Revolving Doors* (Robotic Empire)

**PICTURE THIS:** This grindcore metal band can be found playing on the same bills as Blood Has Been Shed and Dimmu Borgir. Their guitarist goes by the name Gunface. Need we say more?



## RED ANIMAL WAR

**FROM:** Dallas, TX

**ALBUM:** *Black Phantom Crusades* (Deep Elm)

**PICTURE THIS:** Moody, driving indie rock for fans of other Deep Elm bands combined with a band like Engine Down. Technical melodies compliment rich textures. A healthy dose of interesting lyrical structures and content rounds out this excellent band.



## RED TAPE

**FROM:** Sacramento, CA

**ALBUM:** *Radioactivist* (Roadrunner)

**PICTURE THIS:** These veterans of the Sacto scene have seen their comrades, like Will Haven and The Hoods, blow up. Now it's their turn. A dash of old-school skate-punk mixed with late-'80's New York hardcore comes close to describing the catchy sounds of Red Tape.



# ROCKY VOTOLATO ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Yes, he's a grown-up hardcore kid playing emotional post-acusti-core. No, not all of his songs are about girls, or radios, or candy hearts, or posies.

He is Rocky Votolato, the earthy songwriter who shook up his usual sound with the recent release of *Suicide Medicine* (Second Nature)—a moody, eloquent collection that answers the most glaring and annoying question that surrounds this man and his music: "Um, so you mean it's like Dashboard Confessional?"

In some ways, Votolato's solo work isn't so different than what he and brother Cody (of The Blood Brothers) do in their band Waxwing. The music is insightful, candid, and oozes sincerity. But in turning down the driving and distorted Waxwing sound, solo Votolato creates an airy soundscape where his distinct blend of darkness and optimism takes center stage.

Although he is frequently

lumped in with (and has even toured with) Dashboard Confessional and the like, Votolato prefers to distinguish himself and his music from the modern emo-pop phenomenon. If you can't hear it in his songwriting (which evokes musicians from early Bob Dylan to Tom Waits to Elvis Costello), a conversation with him will leave no doubt unchecked.

"I've always done what I do and people are going to make of me what they are going to make of me," explains Votolato, who admits he sometimes worries about how history will view the musical/aesthetic movement with which he has been lumped. "I wish people would stop and listen to the music," he explains, "but I don't give a shit. I'm not riding a wave. When [emo] dies and those artists go away, I'll still be doing what I'm doing."

Fortunately for Votolato, his music speaks for itself with a vulnerability that's more Johnny

Cash than Chris Carrabba. A mesh of confrontation: it's Votolato versus himself, Votolato versus the world, Votolato versus his loved ones, and Votolato versus you. All at once: "I have not yet earned the right to die/I want you to hear me screaming/I want you to notice what goes on," he sings on "Death-Right." Paired with country-infused indie rock that is undeniably from the American West, Votolato's stark presentation is both an indictment and a celebration. It's deceptively complex.

It's this Billy Bragg-esque quality that will ultimately distinguish Votolato from many of his accidental contemporaries. As the popular mainstream continues its bad habit of focusing on whatever is simplest and most accessible, Rocky Votolato is busy, quietly making complex records that will be listened to a long time from now. **[Ronen Kauffman]**



# SCISSORFIGHT WEED, GUNS, & AXES... WE DON'T PAY OUR TAXES

"I wouldn't come back. Fuck civilization man," quips Scissorfight bassist Paul Jarvis after asking the woodsman how long it would take him to find his way back to civilization if left for dead deep in the wilderness. "I'm still waiting for civilization to find me. It's taking a long time." Ever since crawling out of the New Hampshire woods they call home and onto stages all across New England and later the world, Scissorfight have developed a reputation of living outside of society's rule. Much like their motto, "Weed, guns and axes! We don't pay our taxes!"

Their music is a distortion-drenched combination of the kind of rock most often found below the Mason-Dixon line crossbred with a hearty dose of the Boston hardcore bands with whom they regularly share the stage. Their thick rock grooves can be found in spades on the band's latest EP, *Deathchants, Breakdowns And Military Waltzes Vol. 2* (Tortuga).

They drink beer and wear their mesh John Deere caps because they're

from the woods. "You know why [the hipsters are] doing that? Because we've been wearing them for fucking 20 years, man. It's just another case of someone making a lot of money off of something I invented," jokes guitarist Geezum H. Crow. One gets the feeling Crow does not wear his cap for kitsch value.

Not only can these burly woodsmen rock hard, but they possess a survivalist's instinct that can only come from life in the boonies. These guys kill animals with their bare hands for both sport and pleasure. "I took down a june bug once," offers Crow. "I fucking tackled a red squirrel, man." Jarvis tells me half jokingly. "Ripped his jaws open, put my head in there."

For all the trash people talk about being tough-as-nails gangsters from the inner city, can any of those places hold up to the backwoods of New Hampshire? How long would someone like 50 Cent last if dropped in the wilderness? "50 Cent? I think he would probably be Zero Cent within no time," says Crow. **[Aaron Lefkove]**

<photos> Scissorfight: Rachel Leah Woliansky; Red Animal War: D. Coston; Red Tape: Ross Siegel



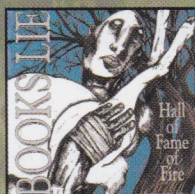
# LEVEL PLANE

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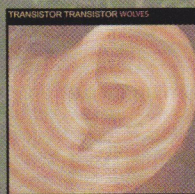
## **RAPIDER THAN HORSEPOWER - STAGE FRIGHT 2xLP**

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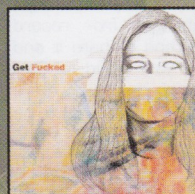
## **BOOKS LIE - HALL OF FAME OF FIRE 12inch/CD**

The latest spiteful and searing slab from these New York veterans.  
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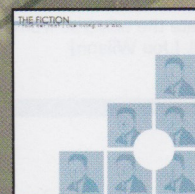
## **TRANSISTOR TRANSISTOR/WOLVES - SPLIT 12inch/CD**

New England's best hardcore units go head to head on one fierce little platter.  
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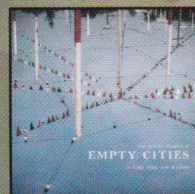
## **GET FUCKED - 10inch/CD**

Sick Honeywell homage as paid by members of Neil Perry, Lickgoldensky and TheNOW.  
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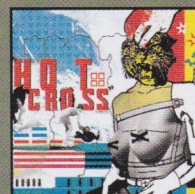
## **THE FICTION - I TOLD HER THAT... LP/CD**

Debut LP/CD from this NYC-based hardcore trio.  
Available in April.



## **THE ONE AM RADIO - EMPTY CITIES 12inch/CD**

The latest release by this LA duo is a lush exploration of beauty and melancholy.  
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## **HOT CROSS - UPCOMING 12inch/CD**

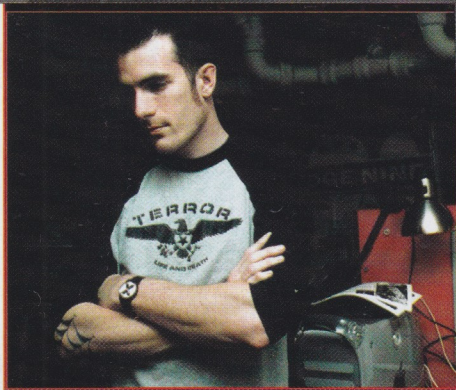
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## BRIDGE NINE

Hardcore's hottest label speaks out.

Even though Boston's Bridge Nine Records has released albums by hardcore heavyweights like Give Up The Ghost, Terror, and Slapshot, the label still remains relatively under the radar. Bridge Nine founder Chris Wrenn speaks his mind.

**How and why did you start Bridge Nine Records?**

I started the label because I had recently moved to a new state for college, and I wanted something to keep me motivated and excited about hardcore. I had recognized two things at that point: Firstly, I felt "hardcore" was a really positive outlet for me, and secondly that hardcore lives and dies in four-to-five year cycles. To stick it out and stay involved you need a vested interest in it, be it a label, fanzine, [or a] band—something that keeps you motivated to weather the downs in the hardcore scene.

**What does Bridge Nine do better than other labels?**

Bridge Nine has a lot of the resources of larger labels, but I've tried hard to maintain some sort of community feel. Some people have tried to pigeonhole Bridge Nine's sound, but we have a lot of different bands [and] different styles of "hardcore." Despite the different kinds of hardcore bands on Bridge Nine, I think any 5 of them could play a show together and it wouldn't be weird.

**Does Bridge Nine have any sort of agenda that it tries to further with its releases?**

We don't have any real political agenda or anything. I just want to put out good hardcore records. I want them to look good, sound good, and document the kind of hardcore we like in the best possible manner. Ten years after the label is done, I want kids to be like, "I wish I was around when Bridge Nine was putting out records."

**How influential has the Boston scene been to Bridge Nine?**

Very. Boston has had such an amazing history with hardcore. DYS, SSD, Slapshot, Jerry's Kids, Gang Green. A lot of those bands, and the many that have come since, laid down the foundation for hardcore on the East Coast. For years there weren't any labels to speak of in Boston [that were] continually putting out hardcore so I'm happy to have filled that void.

**How much has skateboarding been a part of Bridge Nine's existence?**

When I started the label, two things were constant in my life: hardcore and skateboarding. Sadly, I don't skate as much as I once did but it still is something I get psyched on. At one point those agendas crossed when Bridge Nine started making skateboards. Originally I stopped making decks [because] I couldn't afford to do both. It was hard for me to sell them because I didn't have much of a website and kids don't buy decks at shows. There has been talk for ages of doing it again and hopefully we'll have something in that direction soon. [RS]



## THE EARLY NOVEMBER THE VAN'S TOO SMALL

Band life can be a bitch. Just ask The Early November.

This New Jersey band would rather forget its first tour (the Warped Tour, incidentally), during which their van skidded off a desert road and flipped over into a ditch. Two weeks later, they got a new van, which was subsequently stolen. Lead guitarist, frontman, and master of understatement, Ace Enders admits, "It was a pretty bad tour for us."

Of course, when problems run deeper than grand theft auto, it's hard to make touring a blast. First, there are the constant squabbles between bandmates: "We fight all the time. That's what touring is about," Enders jokes. "It's about going out, being uncomfortable on the road, and fighting with each other." Additionally, there are the cynical members of the rock 'n roll masses who add to the sea of frustrations. "We work every single day and it's not that easy when you have people that heckle you. Everybody thinks you have a rockstar attitude and

all you care about is money."

Well, it may not be all the band cares about, but Enders claims that Drive-Thru still owes them a significant sum for their new record *The Room's Too Cold*. "People think that you're on a label and you're releasing records and you're done. But that's not it at all. I mean, I'm poorer than ever right now."

The bad luck streak reached improbable heights when, during a performance, bassist Sergio Anello, carelessly swinging his instrument around, accidentally caused an intimate meeting between the bass and Enders' skull. "[Anello] didn't think it was going to be a big deal if we hit each other, but he hit me in the head and knocked me out. They played another song without me, the singer and guitar player, so that works, right?" says Enders. Buddy Nielsen from Senses Fail and Ken Vasoli from The Starting Line completed the set.

The recent string of frustration has produced at least one positive side effect: in order to relieve some built-up

tension, Enders has been working on a solo project with engineer/producer Chris Badami of Portrait Recording Studios in New Jersey (who also co-produced *The Room's Too Cold*). "We love the way Chris produces and I love to have control." Enders first solo project will be entitled, appropriately, *I Can Make A Mess Like Nobody's Business*. It is scheduled for a March release on Drive-Thru. With each subsequent release with his band, he plans to change the name of the project. Enders explains, "These days, if your sound changes from record to record, people tend to hate it and they say how bad your band is. So I figure if I just change the name every time, [I] can avoid that. You can be something different and people won't have to criticize you." That's one way of looking at it.

Who knows? Maybe it will keep those mystical forces of bad luck that seemingly permeate the universe from finding you as well. [Joe Wilson]



## HIMSA WORK HARD, PLAY HARDER

"I'm the business guy of the band," says Himsa bassist Derek Harn. As Harn finishes loading gear into a club for that night's show he says, "One of the things I like to do the most is tour. I like being out on the road and in different places all the time." The band has been on the road since April and played more than 300 shows in 2003 alone. "And now," Harn says, "we're booked up until April of next year. We'll go longer than [April] if we need to. As long as we're getting different tours and we're not starving to death and we're not burnt out, we'll just stay on the road."

Hard work is nothing new for these hardcore veterans. Since 1998 Himsa have toured consistently and released two albums. They are one of the last bands standing from the wave of metalcore coming out of the Pacific Northwest in the mid '90's; the same scene that produced the bands Botch, Trial, and Harkonen. Their

latest, *Courting Tragedy And Disaster* (Prosthetic), has already created quite a buzz in hardcore and metal circles.

Harn, who also was a member of the bands Genuine and Trial, is no stranger to the hustle. In the late '90's he published a zine called *Rust* that spotlighted the most aggressive sounds coming out of the northwest. Taking advantage of his job at a national copy chain, Harn and his friends had "collating parties" that lasted well into the night, in order to get the zine out economically.

Those skills have translated well to his job as the self-proclaimed businessman of Himsa. "My strongest skill is networking with people and getting stuff taken care of. I feel I'm pretty motivated so that's one of my bigger roles in the band, aside from the bass," says Harn. "Actually, bass playing is one of the smaller roles I play in the band." [Aaron Lefkove]

<photos> Bridge 9: Casey Davis; Himsa: Jerry Guzman



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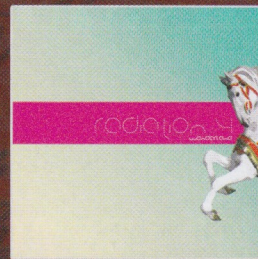
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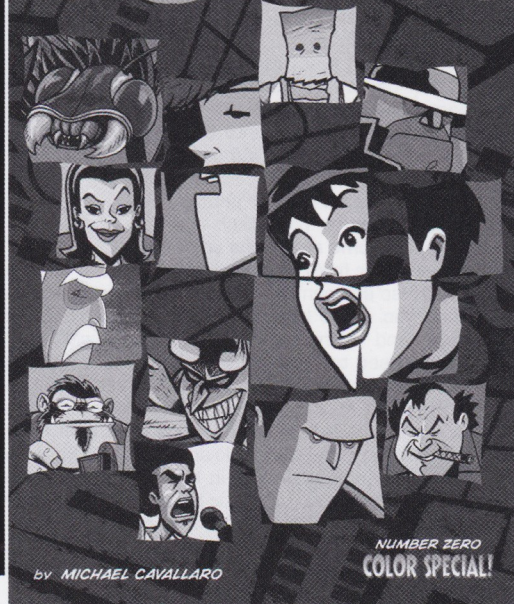
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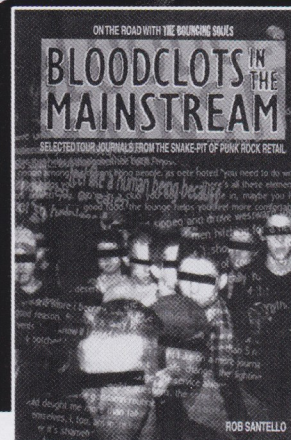
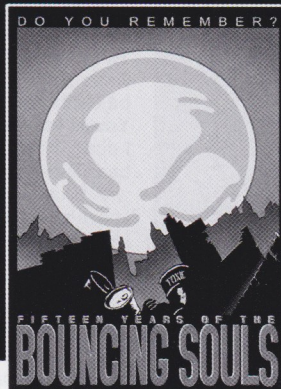
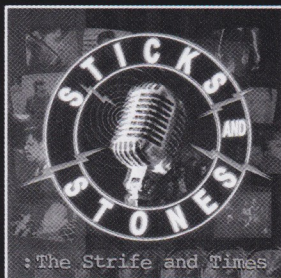
# EAST COAST PRIDE

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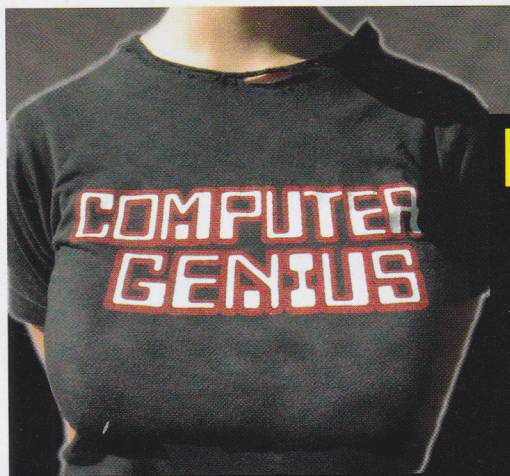
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## HARDWIRED

### The Meatiest Sites On The Web

#### Surreal Coconut: Meat Gallery

**URL:** [http://www.surrealcoconut.com/meat\\_gallery\\_home.html](http://www.surrealcoconut.com/meat_gallery_home.html)  
**The Goods:** For years the term "great sculpture" has conjured images of Michelangelo's "David" or Rodin's "The Thinker," but soon such works as "The failed raid of the meat police on Meatyville" and "Meat Gun" will join the canon. There is a new generation of artists out there and they have rejected marble and clay and embraced skirt steak and veal as their preferred media. This gallery displays dozens of the choicest sculptures since the invention of the refrigerated boxcar. My personal favorites are the well-marbled "Meat Priestess Apocalypse Barbie" and "The Meat Mover." Barbie has been turned into the Angel of Death; her carpaccio wings flap angrily and she ponders our impending doom. Remember, great sculpture stirs the soul, but it can also give you a nasty E. Coli infection if it's not cooked properly. [Tim Holden]

#### Meat Or Accident?

**URL:** <http://www.meatoraccident.co.uk/>

**The Goods:** In this exciting new online game you have to figure out if you're looking at a prime cut of filet mignon or the stump of a bleeding amputee. The rules are easy. First we give you a close up from a larger picture, then it's your job to guess from that small picture if the image is of glorious, tasty, wholesome meat or a vile accident. Be sure to look closely and gather all the clues you can. Don't be hasty, ask yourself, "Is that red image with white spots a close up of canned ham or a third degree burn?" Once you feel confident, either click on the cash register for "MEAT" or on the ambulance for "ACCIDENT" to see either animal meat or human flesh. Oh boy will you be in for a surprise! [Tim Holden]

#### Hats Of Meat

**URL:** <http://www.designboom.com/trash/bse.html>

**The Goods:** Goodbye Pork Pie Hat, hello hats made of real meat! There are only five models in this year's catalogue, but hats of meat will be all the rage by next season. Trust me. How about a chopped meat baseball hat for little Jimmy to wear while playing in the yard? The hipster in your family will just love the Canadian bacon helmet with sausage link chin straps. And how about the kosher brisket yarmulke? I can just see the ladies in temple whispering, "Mmm, Mmm. I'd just love to flip that boy upside down and grill him 'till he's done just right." The F.A.Q. session on the left side of the page is informative, but could use a bit more work. There is no way a squirt gun of lemon juice will stop a full grown pit bull from gnawing your hat and brain without taking the time to realize the difference. What a bunch of meatheads. [Adam Lindenbaum]

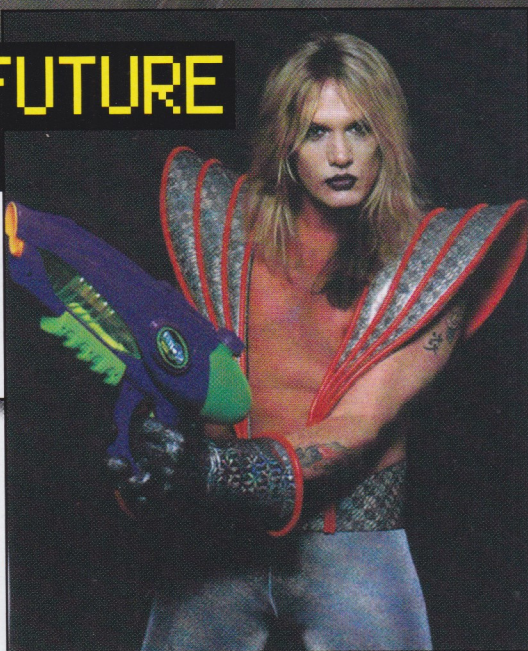
#### The Perfect Pork Martini

**URL:** <http://www.foody.org/home/martini.html>

**The Goods:** I must pay homage to Josh Karpf, the food critic who has been my source for providing Hardwired loyalists with much of their clicking pleasure over the past year. This guy has got no fear. He soaked four different kinds of pork in vodka, seeking to find the timeless quest for an Atkins-friendly beverage. Of course, Homer Simpson already thought of the spare rib smoothie, but is that really the kind of high you're looking for? True to his science, Josh tries 'em all. Ground pork was the winner; Spam the big loser. Surprise, Surprise. Josh states the animals harmed during this experiment are the pigs, although I believe the disgusted vegetarians amongst us are animals too. But to all you herbivores out there, I say, "Long live pork." [Adam Lindenbaum]

# BACK TO THE FUTURE SEBASTIAN BACH

Singer of Skid Row, crooner on Broadway, and man about town. What is this legend up to?



Sebastian, the first concert I ever went to was Paul McCartney with my parents. The second concert I ever went to was Skid Row and Bon Jovi. So, there's the first show I went to and then there's the *first* show I went to.

Well, I was probably 24 or 25 when we did that tour. I'm 35 now, so I've grown up a bit.

**You were selling out Giants Stadium when you were—**

20 years old. [Skid Row's] first album came out in January of 1989 and by March it went gold. By June people were calling us an overnight success, and I was like, "no dude, it took at least two weeks." [laughter] It was a lot of fun, but it was kind of hazy in my memory. We were one of the last bands of that era to make it really fucking huge before Nirvana and the internet. Now the difference is that a huge album today is if Eminem sells two million copies. For us two million was a failure. *Slave To The Grind* [1991] did six million copies worldwide. *Subhuman Race* [1995] did two million copies and that was considered a failure.

**When you see *Behind The Music* for Guns N' Roses or Mötley Crüe, those bands were very near the edge on numerous occasions. Did that ever happen to Skid Row?**

Yeah. On the Guns N' Roses tour that was the height of the debauchery, drug-taking scene for us in 1991. Actually, we probably topped that on our headlining tour right after that. [laughter]

**Are the Guns N' Roses guys cool? Are they nice to hang out with?**

Well, I don't know if you'd call them nice, that's probably not the right word. They're cordial, though, but they have a serious dark side to them. We became good friends with them. I was second in line [to sing] for their new band, Velvet Revolver. I recorded five songs with them in the studio and I pretty much had the gig until they picked Scott Weiland of Stone Temple Pilots. But, I'm still very good friends with Duff and Slash. That's more than I can say for the Skid Row guys, the only member of that band I'm still friends with is the drummer [Rob Affuso]. They kicked me out of their band and I don't know how many times you've been fired from a job, but you really don't want to hang out with the people who fired you later on. It's like, "fuck you, man." We're on tour right now with Alice Cooper and Twisted Sister, and Rob is going to play some songs with me for the first time in ten years. That's gonna be exciting. I have Adam from Skinlab on guitar—**You're into heavy stuff? Skinlab's pretty heavy.** I don't know. There's two kinds of music, good and bad. There's predictable pop and good pop. Same with Broadway shows: I love doing *Jekyll & Hyde*, but I have no interest in doing *Annie Get Your Gun*.

**How is the green room at a Broadway show versus the green room at Giants stadium?**

Well, if you're the star of a Broadway show you get your own dressing room to wait in before the show, and if there is any partying it's done at bars after the show. These Broadway people, they showed me how to party. They love their wine and their

beer. I just did six months on the road in *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

**How was it playing *Jesus*?**

It was tough and humbling. I felt a lot of pressure to play the son of God every night. There were definitely worries that if I fucked up I'd get a lightning bolt from the rafters. [laughter] Believe it or not, doing that play made me more religious than I had been before. Getting in touch with what happened to Jesus made me more aware of what he went through. It was a learning experience. Man, they were *so* mean to that guy. Act I was all nice and fun and going to Jerusalem, and then Act II they just rip me down the stairs and beat me with walking strips and hit me and string me up on the fucking cross. It was rough. I have even more respect for these Broadway people who do eight shows a week then travel on Monday and still go to bars and party every fucking night. It was like, "dudes, chill out!" [laughter]

**When you walk down the street in *The Village* in New York do people go, "dude, there's Sebastian Bach"?**

Yeah, when I walk down the street in Allentown, PA they do too. One thing about me is that I'm really tall. I'm like six-foot three, so people are usually like, "look at the tall guy with long hair."

**Do you wear jeans and a T-shirt when you're hanging out?**

Yeah, when I was playing in 1989 I was wearing leather pants as a rebellion against society. Leather pants were fucking out there back then. Now you go into a mall and go into Gap Kids and they have leather pants. It's like, "Whoa, what happened to my style?"

**My mom wears leather pants.**

That's awesome. [laughter]

**Who are some musicians you admire?**

Corey Taylor from Slipknot. I love that band because they're so anti-commercial and so fucking heavy and energetic. I also love that you can take off Corey's mask and do more mainstream rock with Stone Sour. I used to hang out with him all the time and he's a fucking wild man. He's really cool. I've been working on my own CD for the past few months. When I do that I only listen to my own stuff on my MP3 player. I take my music and listen to it for a long time while driving around in the car or cutting the lawn so I can have the music become second nature and figure out melodies that are interesting. That's what this tour is all about. We're playing a lot of new songs on this tour. I'm also working on my second solo CD for Spitfire Records. [RS]



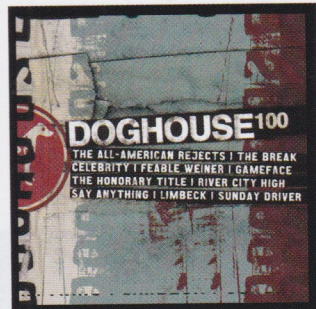




## DAUGHTERS-Canada Songs (Robotic Empire)

Daughters burst forth, middle fingers raised high, with an unreal debut full-length of ultra-brutal grind-influenced screaming chaos, with songs combining so much so quickly that it's almost dizzying, but they somehow manage to hold it all together and still take it way up a notch. This may sound like a bunch of grandiose hype, but we're dead serious... this album is absolutely crushing and could shake the foundation of heavy music as we know it.

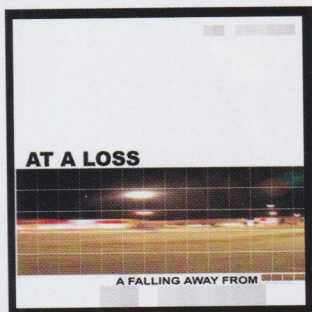
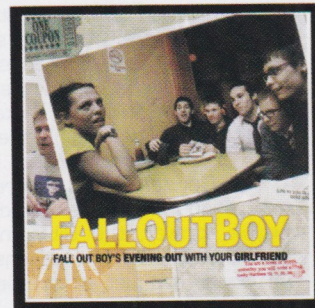
## FALLOUT BOY-Evening Out With Your Girl (Uprising)



## V/A-Doghouse 100 (Doghouse)

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A pristine pop punk platter to make the pretty girls swoon if ever there was one, Fallout Boy's debut delivers. Complete with the invigorating punch of New Found Glory, the melodic sensitivities of Saves the Day and the smart arrangements of Blink 182 combined.



## AT A LOSS-A Falling Away From (Blackout!)

Incredible musicians, great songs, expanding the boundaries of hardcore, punk, and other styles.

## BLUE SKY GOODBYE- Look On The Brightside (Uprising)

Part indie, part punk and altogether charming, heartfelt and incredibly talented, Blue Sky Goodbye are the latest in a long line of earnest, emotive voices from the Midwest, a la The Get Up Kids and Promise Ring.

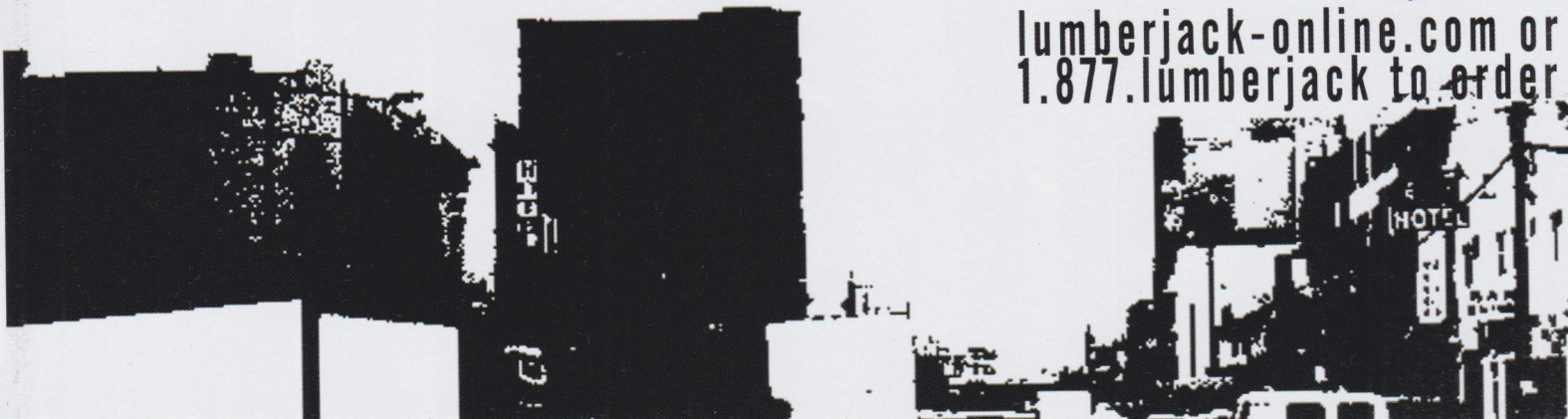


## SCISSORFIGHT- Deathchants, Breakdowns, and Military Waltzes (Tortuga)

Originally available as part of the European exclusive "American Cloven Hoof Blues", these tracks are the hidden link in Scissorfight's revolutionary climb from 1999's "New Hampshire" to 2001's "Mantrapping for Sport and Profit".



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# NORMA JEAN HIPPIES AT HEART

On occasion, interviewing the boys of Norma Jean can be more of an arduous process than doing an interview with Radiohead. When I contacted Solid State Records' publicist, I was informed that after New York's CMJ festival, half of Norma Jean took off to hitchhike around California. While train hopping and hitchhiking are hardly the supposed means of transportation for members of a band whose sound is a brutal blend of power-violence, metal, and emo, this is the norm for Atlanta's Norma Jean.

Case in point: when I grilled drummer Daniel Davison about where they draw their inspirations from, he listed off: encouraging people, prayer, the Bible, nature, birds, God, tacos, and BBQ as reasons for existing. His influences are just as diverse, including Sixteen

Horsepower, Sigur Rós, Botch, Frodus, Nirvana, Unsane, Beloved, and C.S. Lewis, to name a few. They don't consider themselves rockstars although they have sold over 20,000 copies of their 2001 debut, *Bless The Martyr And Kiss the Child*. Even in their hometown of Atlanta they're not treated like rock gods. "We're just treated like [ordinary] dudes. Atlanta shows are always a good time."

The band takes the utmost pride in their hometown, sounding more like *The Sound Of Music*'s von Trapp family than a metal band from the dirty South. "We love Atlanta. The people are always supportive of bands like The Souls Unrest, Mastodon, and us," Davison says. "We're not trying to change the face of Southern rock, we are just trying to play music that we

like. All the while enjoying the great qualities of the South: hot BBQ, blessed sweet tea, nice folks, trees, and Waffle House." And of course, snowflakes on eyelashes, brown paper packages wrapped up with string... you get the picture.

Even though Norma Jean managed to fly further under the radar than other bands that share their consumer appeal. In 2003, the band had nary a day off the entire year. They've shared bills with bands like Hatebreed, Every Time I Die, Beloved, and Converge. The secret their to success? "We all pull [our inspiration] from different areas, and when we come together all of those influences come together," says bassist Scott Schultz. "Your life should motivate you do to what you enjoy and for all of us that has happened!" ▀





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# CHRISTIANSEN

## STELLAR STYLE, RADICAL ROCK

Too often American underground rock is associated with the yankee snobs that live in the northern half of the country. Cities like Boston, New York, San Francisco, Chicago, hell... even Minneapolis, are bastions of creative and groundbreaking aggressive rock and roll. When people think of Atlanta, Memphis, New Orleans, and other metropolitan musical scenes in the South, images of The Allman Brothers or Lynyrd Skynyrd—or perhaps Outkast and Master P—come to mind.

Christiansen wants to remind people that not only does the South churn out some of the best punk rock around, but also that Louisville, Kentucky's independent scene has just as storied a past as any other city in America. Bands as diverse as Elliott, The Shipping News, The Rachel's, and Black Cross all hail from this town, famous for whiskey, tobacco and Initial Records. The result: Louisville bands sound nothing like stereotypical Southern rock and roll.

Collectively, Christiansen are Brandon Bondehagen, (guitar/vocals), Terry Campbell (drums/vocals), Brad Magers (bass), and Robby Scott (guitar), musicians all in their early twenties. "The Louisville scene was dead for a couple of years," says Bondehagen. "Right now, it is starting to rebuild itself from the ashes of bands like By The Grace of God, Guilt, Metroschifter; bands that really carried the scene there for most of the early '90's."

Unlike those bands, Christiansen chose not to pursue relations with Initial, even though Campbell used to work for the label. Bondehagen explains, "We didn't want to hop on a label because we had an inside connection. We wanted to find a label on our own and start there." Nonetheless, he adds, "Falling Forward's *Hand Me Down* is a cornerstone of the indie rock movement," showing

the band's immense respect for Louisville's best known independent rock company.

The band's first record, *Emphasizing Function Over Design*, was released in 2001 on Eulogy Recordings and took a heavier approach than subsequent recordings. A change in the American hardcore landscape may have urged Christiansen to create a less straight-forward, more eclectic punk rock style and sound. 2002's *Forensic Brothers And Sisters!*, brought the band a wider audience; tours with high-profile bands like Glassjaw, Vaux, and Vendetta Red; and a slew of comparisons to At The Drive-in (one such comparison came from *Law of Inertia*). Bondehagen lashes out at critics who immediately write off his band as clones: "It's frustrating when assholes write reviews about you that state that you're a direct rip off of another band. No one is going to consider listening to your record [in that case]. Some people possess opinions and mentalities that are so one-sided they don't even hear the music. They just hear the words of their review and how 'cool' it's going to make them look because they think that their opinions are *dogmatic*, when in fact they're actually dogshit. At The Drive-In was a great band. But they are one of many influences that inspire Christiansen."

The frontman's wrath aside, their new record for Revelation, *Stylish Nihilists* is more true to Louisville's creative spirit than any other record of the past five years. The band eschews the same aesthetic sense so many other rockers have favored, and have made a record that is jagged, hyperactive, fun, and intense. Their music, a bit subversive if you look just below the surface, carries their knowledge of art history, and literary talent, as well as a keen understanding of the current state of popular culture. It's time for a Southern revolution. ■



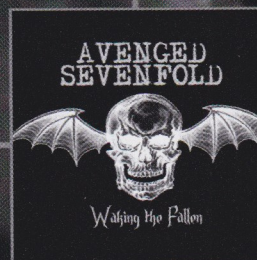
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# FLOGGING MOLLY

## GUINNESS IN THEIR BLOOD. LITERALLY.

**S**ure, it's been linked to anger, abuse, depression, and death.

Okay, it's also the source of a global health epidemic and in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century was one of many vices that "health experts" bestowed with that damning suffix, "ism", establishing its misuse as a diagnosable, treatable disease.

It can rip people apart and destroy lives.

It is also responsible for good times, bringing people together, and, in some cases, giving birth to great music.

It is alcohol, and Dennis Casey, guitarist for the Celt-punk band Flogging Molly, is no stranger to the double-edged liquid sword. Luckily, he and his bandmates have been able to steer clear of the pointy end and have, for the last several years, accentuated, embraced, and darn nearly deified the fun, social, life's-too-short-for-sobriety end.

It all started at Molly Malone's, a popular Los Angeles Irish pub. Vocalist Dave King, formerly of Fastway, a patron and part-time performer, was always looking for a good time and, if possible, a band. Casey unloads the story of Molly's creation the way that guy sitting next to you tells stories at happy hour: like he's told it a million times before, like it belongs in a book, like its part of an arsenal of anecdotes that true, career drinkers never leave home without.

"[Fiddle player] Bridget [Regan] was the first one. Dave saw her at Molly Malone's and they started talking, and he says, yeah, I could use a fiddle player. Then [drummer] George [Schwindt], he'd seen Dave play so he auditioned and he was in the band. Matt Hensley, the accordion player, had gone to a Flogging Molly gig with a friend, and his friend asked Dave if he wanted to meet Matt. They met, and Dave pretty much told him he was in the band without auditioning or anything. They found Nathan [Maxwell] later, the bass player, also at Molly Malone's.

"I was supposed to be in the band, but I was in another one and my sense of loyalty prevented me from joining Flogging Molly. My band fell apart, the record never came out, and I went back to painting houses. At least a year later, Dave called me up, asked if I was still into being in Flogging Molly, and I told him how glad I was that he kept my phone number. It all fell in to place. We started playing, and right away, everybody just said 'this is the band'.

A lot can happen when you spend your nights nursing Guinness and Jameson's and engaging in conversations with people you've never met. Casey is a born conversationalist. He's endearingly enthusiastic about his band, and, perhaps even more admirably, his fans. Instead of falling into the age-old rockstar trap of fame-as-burden, he consciously uses it to meet and connect with people.

He recalls a time the band played a show and Casey bumped into a fan, told the fan he

was just on his way for a bite to eat, and invited him along. "So we're sitting there, and he's like 'Oh my god, I can't believe you invited us,' and all that." He admits it makes him a bit awkward when fans get starstruck. He'd rather just talk to people like they're [regular] people. He just wants to have a good time.

Even across three thousand miles of amber waves of grain and purple mountains, it feels like he's that guy who is always on the same stool at your favorite bar; the guy who loves music, loves to talk, loves people, loves life, and yeah, okay, loves to drink.

Well, a band that thanks "Guinness" in its liner notes, right along things like "Mom and Dad", isn't exactly trying to hide it. Have they ever thought about advertising for the one and only stout? "Yeah! Actually, we've talked to the Guinness people before. They're not really into it, though." I ask him why not. "Well, what's the point? We advertise for them anyway... why should they pay us?" Seems the St James' Gate Brewery should win an award for business savvy.

Before I know it, my time with Dennis is up. Before I go, he puts his money where his mouth is, tells me when he's going to be in New York City, and suggests we meet up for (you guessed it) a drink.

Dave King has said that he wants each show his band plays to be a "big fucking party," where everybody has fun. Apparently, the charter of Flogging Molly extends beyond the shows, beyond the band, to its individual members.

The world's a bar, and Flogging Molly just happens to be the house band.

Cheers. ■



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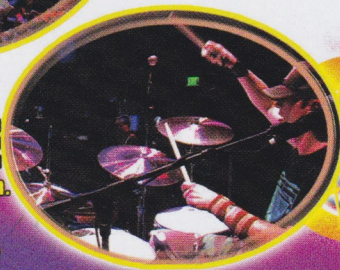
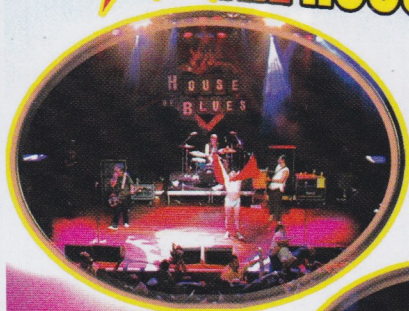
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# BLEEDING THROUGH

The Misfits and Samhain were great bands, but come on. Glenn Danzig is a diminutive beefcake with delusions of grandeur. Bleeding Through founder and singer Brandon Schieppati (who bears a tattoo of the Crimson Ghost, the Misfit's mascot, on his forearm) recently had the good fortune to reap the rewards of one of Danzig's prima donna antics.

"We played a Halloween show," Schieppati reports. "[And] the coolest part was that Danzig was playing the same night at a different venue. The same promoter was doing both shows and on Danzig's rider [included] 'a brand new RV with like all this food in it, a shower and all this stuff.' Then, at the show, Danzig was like 'And, I also want 5,000 more dollars.' The promoter's like 'Go fuck yourself,' and Danzig's like, 'Fine, I'm canceling the show, I'm leaving.' So they took the RV and gave it to us. It was awesome. We got to eat a whole lot of really good food."

Schieppati, a mainstay of the Orange County hardcore scene, is not used to the rock star treatment. The vocalist first made a name for himself as a guitarist in two of the O.C.'s most brutal hardcore bands: Eighteen Visions and Throwdown. Formed more than four years ago, Bleeding Through was initially his side project, but Schieppati soon gave up Throwdown due to his crazed schedule, and abandoned Eighteen Visions when they began to add alternative rock influences into their music. "I still wanted to play really brutal stuff," he says.

Bleeding Through is a strange beast. The band looks like Samhain but they're straight-edge. They play absolutely feral Swedish-style death metal with crushing hardcore breakdowns but have a female keyboardist who adds a layer of black metal atmospherics. Schieppati says he writes about twenty percent of the music, but has given up playing guitar onstage, which he misses. Bleeding Through released their self-produced debut *Dust To Ashes* (Prime Directive) in 2001 and followed it with the acclaimed *Portrait Of The Goddess* (Indecision). Now, a year later, they're back with a new record, *This Is Love, This Is Murderous*, a new big-time producer, Ulrich Wild (Static-X, Pantera), and a new label, Trustkill.

"Initially, I think people thought that we were going to change our style because it's been a trend on Trustkill," Schieppati concedes. "That's one thing I wanted to prove with this record. We're not fucking changing. We're going to be fast, we're going to be angry, we're going to be heavy. And that's just how it's going to be. I think kids are starting to realize that."

Bleeding Through may not sound much different from their pre-Trustkill days, but they look different. In the past year, original keyboardist Molly Street left the band to pursue her dreams. Schieppati explains: "[Molly] goes to a really expensive photography art institute. She has heat coming down on her from her parents to finish school and that's

her first priority. That's what she really loves doing, so she doesn't want to be touring with seven sweaty dudes anymore, which is understandable."

To fill Street's space, Schieppati called Marta, whom the band had previously met at a show in Seattle. "I'm like 'You told me that if we ever needed a keyboard player to call you, so I'm calling you right now.' She was stoked." Marta has been an instant hit with fans (especially male fans), but I wondered, if the band ever thinks it's a pain having a girl around on tour? Schieppati laughs, "Other than the fact that she has to pee every two hours? Every two hours she's like, 'Stop the van, I've got to go pee.' That's like the only problem. She's the youngest and the newest member of the band so she gets all the fucking heat. She puts up with it though."

With their new line-up, Bleeding Through are busy taking *This Is Love...* to the masses and they recently got off a huge tour with their good friends, AFI. But despite such high-profile tours, some folks at Trustkill are afraid that album sales are being held back by the new record's gruesome artwork: a photo of a dagger stabbing a real heart as it rests in a pool of blood. Schieppati explains, "I'm into B-horror movies. I just wanted something mildly disturbing. I guess our record label kind of wishes we didn't do that. But I don't care— I'm not in this to be Linkin Park." ■





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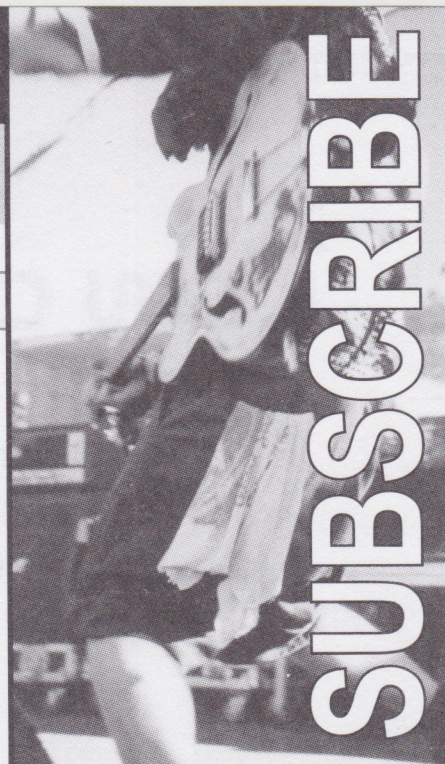
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# BOUNCING SOULS

New Jersey's punk rock heroes spill all... maybe for the last time.

"Olé olé olé olé" is a traditional chant happily sung by soccer hooligans as they cheer on their team. In the U.S., however, this tune is most often heard coming from the mouths of young punks standing in the darkness awaiting the Bouncing Souls. As they watch the stage intently, they chant "olé" over and over. It is not so much a cheer here as it is a rallying cry to bring their team forward. And every time, not so surprisingly, it works.

Four years ago, this chant was adopted by the football-loving Souls' for the track "Olé!" on their album *Hopeless Romantic*. Unlike the soccer fans who are quick to start a fight and steal your girlfriend, the Bouncing Souls are amicable guys from New Jersey who, while making it big in the punk scene, never really broke through the dam into mainstream waters. Since the release of *Hopeless Romantic* in 1999, the Souls have transformed their sound into a focused, introspective style of songwriting that emphasizes melody and more substantive lyrics. Where the band once spewed free-form fun and party-like energy, they now take on issues like politics and genuine love—a far cry from tunes about drinking with your buddies. The lyrics slowly moved from the humorous "I like your Mom and it's no fad/I wanna marry her and be your Dad," to the thoughtful, "I wanna be a simple man with a little piece of mind/Live a simple life in a place that's kind" ("Better Days" from *Anchors Aweigh*).

In short, the Souls grew up. These four high school friends are no longer young twentysomethings looking to make their way in the world. They're settled down—they've been on the road for 15 years, some of them are married and all of them have more responsibilities than they did when they were young punks. They thought it was about time to write something that had more weight. On the Souls' last two albums they've started to play less carefree punk in lieu of writing songs that express their feelings about heartbreak and the misguided politics of the Bush Administration. They've used their last two albums, *How I Spent My Summer Vacation* and *Anchors Aweigh* as media for expressing these beliefs. Greg Attonito, the mouthpiece for the Souls, explains, "We're businessmen but we haven't lost the whole experience of growing up together and those experiences are still with us. We just expanded. We're all buddies who grew up and became business people together."

In 1993, the Bouncing Souls borrowed a couple thousand dollars from their friend Timmy Chunks (who also, had, in turn, borrowed the money himself) and started their own record label, Chunksaah. Determined to be successful against the odds, their goal was to put out their records because, as Attonito says, "we figured no one else was going to do it." The next year, since no other labels had shown much interest, they released their first album, *Good, The Bad & The Argyle*, which included songs dedicated to their favorite '80's songs and one that proclaimed their love for a woman who would soon become famous with all Bouncing Souls fans, Kate ("Kate Is Great"). Attonito first met Kate Hiltz when she was running a futon shop in New Brunswick. Attonito recalls, "Bryan [Kienlen] got a job there and I used to come by and wish I had a job there because I didn't have any money." Hiltz's knowledge of management came in handy when she was asked to help the Bouncing Souls run the label. Nowadays, Hiltz and Gracie handle the everyday affairs of the label and Kienlen, Attonito and Pete Steinkopf oversee the creative end of things.

On the morning that I spoke with Attonito, he was excited to go pick up the band's new equipment hauler for their fall tour. Between tours, they had accumulated additional lighting equipment, a Vox amp for Steinkopf, and a new bass head setup and keyboard accessories for Kienlen. Eric, their old box truck, wouldn't be able to handle this surge in merchandise. And although Attonito was quick to point out that he still occasionally skateboards (he had recently bought a Powell) it was clear that they were no longer looking for trouble. In fact, Attonito confessed that he wasn't sure if there is going to be another Bouncing Souls record after *Anchors Aweigh*.

Perhaps because it might be their last opportunity to speak their mind about the issues that concern them, they layered their *Anchors Aweigh* album with a range of issues, but focused on one in particular that had significantly affected them as of late. Namely, politics.

Although only "Born Free" is specifically about the political landscape under the Bush Administration, the feeling of discontent flows consistently through the whole album. "We wrote the one song, and seeing what's been going on since September 11<sup>th</sup> and the Iraq war, I wanted to write more songs about it, but it just didn't come out naturally. Your statement is in how you live, not necessarily in what you say." Attonito offers the example of Bryant Gumble, a former anchor for NBC who departed the network for a position with PBS. "I saw a show on PBS by Bryant Gumble about what the media is and isn't doing and he was questioning the networks and corporate backed media. He's trying to do something that's real." Attonito explains that he doesn't believe the corporate media is fulfilling their responsibility to the public, "[The media] should try to uncover the truth, as opposed to only sensationalizing and trying to entertain. By doing that they're avoiding the truth and they're not uncovering what is going on."

One of those times, many media critics have said, that the media took advantage of their position and exploited the fears of the American public was during their coverage of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Instead of just explaining what was going to be done in reaction to the event, NBC, CBS, ABC and CNN aired and repeatedly re-aired the clips of the two commercial airlines smashing into the World Trade Center. As America waited and watched for an explanation of why it happened and to see if we were still in danger, time ticked by and ratings soared.

The day before, the Bouncing Souls had flown out of Newark airport in Newark, NJ to begin their overseas tour in Scotland. Having heard the news, the band was sitting in disbelief when Attonito says he "was sitting there and was like, 'Holy shit! I've got to go look at our CD!'" On the back of their album *How I Spent My Summer Vacation* is an illustration of the Bouncing Souls guy surrounded by fiery buildings as he crushes Tower One and points, forebodingly toward the almost perfectly clear sky. The album was released on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, just four months before 9/11. "I brought it back to Bryan who did the artwork, and was like 'What were you thinking, dude?' He was like, 'I don't know. I just drew all the things I like. I like buildings. I like fire. I like the Bouncing Souls guy. And I liked them all together.'"

The Bouncing Souls certainly weren't the inspiration for September 11<sup>th</sup>, but it's clear that that event and many others in the past three years have shaped their outlook on life and are partially responsible for transforming this fiery punk band. Yet, Attonito still has a spark left in him and a profound love for those '80's movies and says, if he could be any character from the '80's, he'd choose John Cusack from *Better Off Dead*. Why? "Because he's a great character. He's lovable." ■

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## DEFENDING YOUR LIFE...

ALL-AMERICAN  
REJECTS

Despite a strong following of fourteen year-old girls, The All-American Rejects have more to them than just hot lead singer, Tyson Ritter, and they'd like you to know that. To learn what these rejects had to say, we nearly woke up these fans of The Darkness during their tour in Mobile, AL after a long night of bowling and drinking.

**Did you just wake up?**

**Tyson Ritter:** Yeah, like half an hour ago.

**What'd you do last night?**

We went bowling with all the other bands [and] got trashed.

**Speaking of having fun, tell me about the "The Cigarette Song."**

[It's] a b-side to a record we put out on Doghouse.

**Do you smoke?**

I used to smoke Camel Lights. God, I love Camel Lights. Now I'm on the wagon. It's tough for me to sing every night if I smoke. I always fall right back off.

**Your audience is made of mostly teenagers. Do you think you're encouraging smoking?**

I didn't write the "The Cigarette Song" to be health-conscious. I'm not telling them to pick [it up]. I'm just telling them to throw them onstage so [drummer] Chris [Gaylor can] get a smoke.

**As you're a part of the pop scene, what do you think of bubblegum pop?**

[I'm] waiting for it to leave. It's only going to sound more manufactured next year. I hate how everything turns into being about the commercials. I heard Tim Armstrong was getting ready to write with Avril Lavigne.

**Whoa. I tend to prefer punk, but I can't stop listening to your album. What can I expect from**

**the next one?**

The road has definitely influenced how I've been writing. It's more sexual. More passionate. It's not fucking sad anymore.

**You're no longer a hopeless romantic?**

I'm a hopeless romantic at heart, of course, but I'm tired of hearing people come to the shows, crying during some songs because they feel the lyrics that much. I mean, I love the lyrics but don't feel them 'til you pee your pants and defecate yourself. That's taking it a little too far, right?

**What's been the Reject's biggest rejection so far?**

**Chris Gaylor:** People think we're a boy band. We're not a boy band, dude. We smoke pot! Rock and Roll!

**Tyson Ritter:** I think our biggest rejection is when people realized we drink and smoke cigarettes. We go inside after we sign your CD, we turn on the red light, and get going crazy with a couple bottles. It could be worse, right?

**It could be boring.**

Exactly.

**What's the best thing you've bought since your album—**

I haven't bought dick. We've been on the road the entire time. We are buying Vespas. Italian leather seats, chrome. The Rejects are going to be like fucking Quadrophonia. I'm thinking mauve.

**You guys have been on the road for a while. What do you all do for fun on the bus so you don't kill each other?**

Everybody usually turns on the Playboy channel and gets tired at the same time [laughs]. Then everybody wakes up 15 minutes later. [Laughs]

**Nothing wrong with a little porn. Now, getting back to the music, bassists who front bands are a rare breed. Do you hope to be like Les Claypool [of**

**Primus] one day?**

I could never be like that. I don't pay attention that hard. I love playing the bass, but I'm a rhythm guitarist of a bass player. I like singing a lot better. I don't think I could do walking scales while I'm singing.

**Do you think it's important to be sexy as a lead singer?**

When you're touring? Totally. Aretha Franklin doesn't need to run every day because that woman is the shit. Almost every morning I run a couple miles. Just to keep the shit in shape.

**You're not too upset that your looks get a lot of attention in the press?**

Every time a chick says something about our eyes I'll be like, "Why do you like us? Cause of the music, right?" Of course, there has to be some appeal in the music. I hope our live show speaks for itself.

**When was the first time you went onstage?**

I think I was in kindergarten at a talent show. I got in a nice suit, looked like a used car salesman and did a stand up act with a pickle in a jar. It was funny as hell but my jokes sucked.

**Where was The All-American Rejects' first show?**

Alton's World Gym of Tumbling. It was a birthday party. We played right by the stretch mirrors and it was funny watching 6<sup>th</sup> graders fly around tumbling while we were playing. It was the weirdest show of my life.

**And tonight you are playing at the University of Mobile. What are your plans before the show?**

Wander around, check out the town.

**See if you can find any southern belles?**

There may be a few tonight. We're nervous. Tonight we're playing a place bigger than where Nick saw Def Leppard. ■







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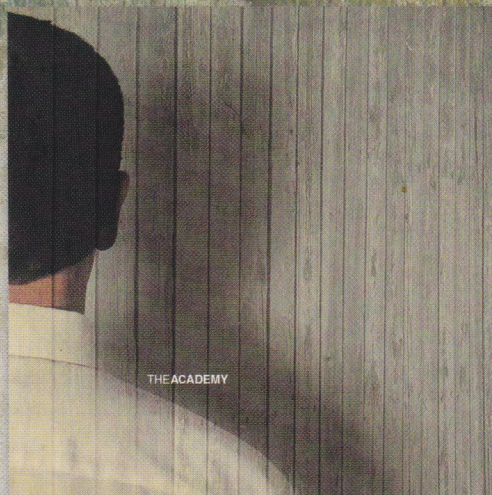


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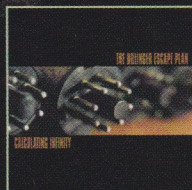
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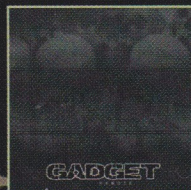


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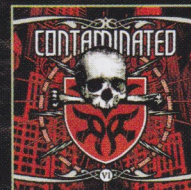
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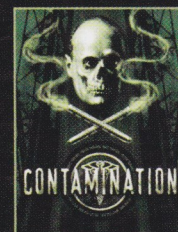
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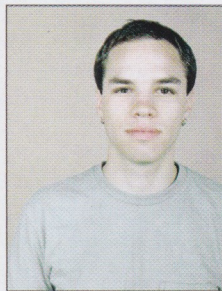
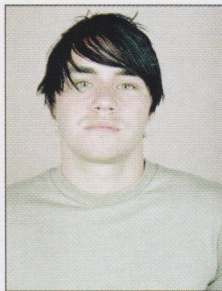
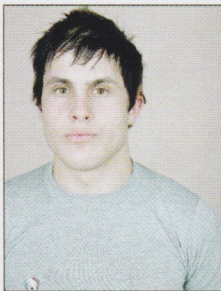
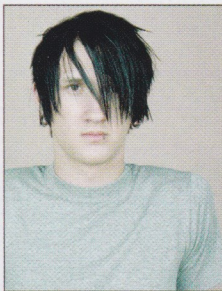
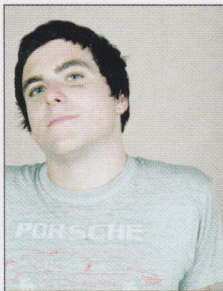
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# Saosin



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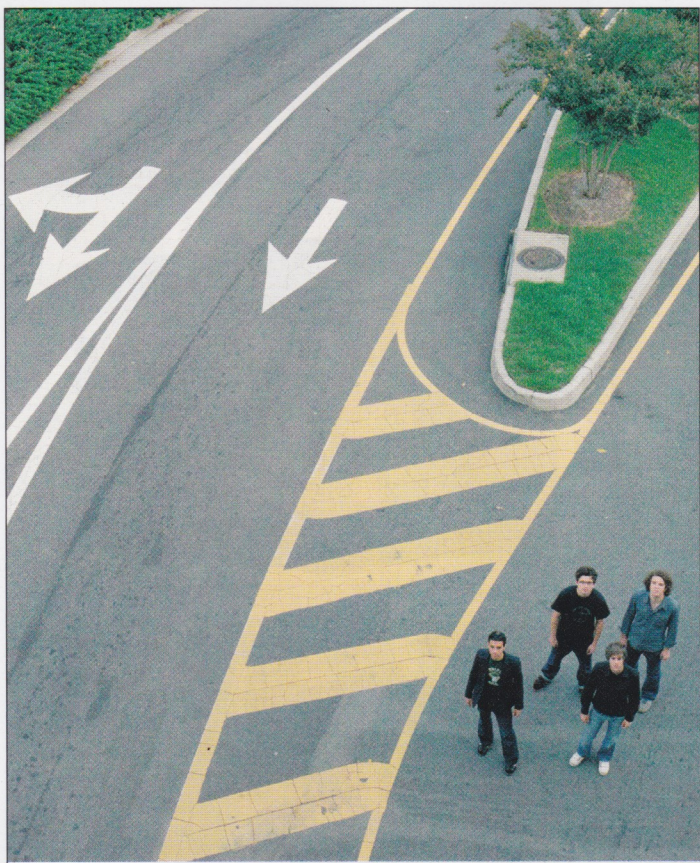


# Engine Down

**Profile:** R.J. Shaughnessy discovered photography by accident: "My friend had a pro camera. You know, something where you could change the lenses. I took a role of film with her camera, and I was like 'holy shit this is amazing!'" From there R.J. began working at a photo lab in Orlando (he grew up in Lauderdale, FL) in order to feed his new habit. "I really like to take photos of my friends," says Shaughnessy. "I was taking photos of New Found Glory when they were just some kids from Florida and then Drive Thru called me one day and said 'We want to pay you for some photos you took.'" At first taken aback by the prospect of being paid to take pictures of his friends, R.J. soon grew accustomed to it. From there he found work through fledgling Fiddler Records. R.J.'s work would soon define the image of Fiddler's bands, a label whose roster is synonymous with style and fashion. "With band photography I ultimately try and make it look as pretty as possible and have some type of hook involved; either a background or a situation or something. It's not really an art theory. It's more a theory of variables." R.J. currently resides in L.A.

For more info you can reach R.J. at [www.rjshaughnessy.com](http://www.rjshaughnessy.com).





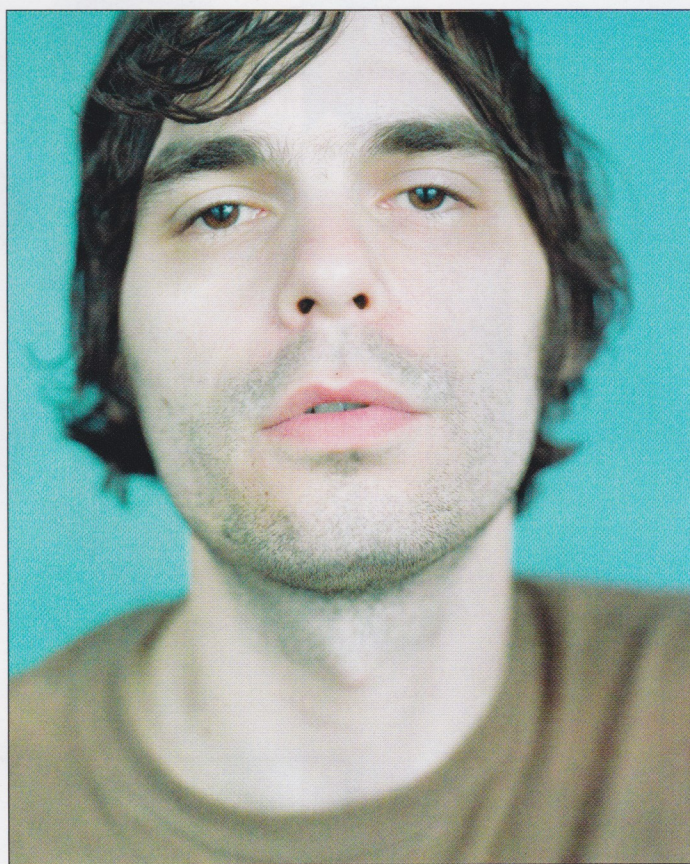
Dashboard Confessional



Armor For Sleep



Taking Back Sunday



Solea





# THE BRONX



I first heard of The Bronx at a Taco Bell in Oklahoma City. The band I was playing bass for at the time had stopped for food while on tour, and at an opposite table were four guys who looked like they hadn't slept in days. Complete with chain wallets and tattoos, eating fast food in the middle of nowhere, with an aura of indifference and exhaustion; they had all the signs of a band on the road.

The night before, while in Detroit, a drunk driver lost control of his car, ran off the road, flew over an embankment, caught air, flipped end over end, and landed in the middle of The Bronx's parked tour van, which contained their sleeping bass player, James Tweedy (who miraculously survived uninjured). The drunk driver then fled to the local 7-11, where he unknowingly attempted to panhandle off their singer, Matt Caughthran. The man was restrained, the cops were called, the van was totaled, the tour was cancelled, and the band lived in a U-Haul for the three-day drive back to L.A. Suddenly our own 14 hour trip that day from Kansas City to Lubbock, TX didn't seem that bad.

Fast-forward to the following week. While crashing at an apartment in Long Beach, California, our host asks if we've ever heard of a band called The Bronx. We laugh at the coincidence and relay our Taco Bell story. He pulls down the record that hangs on the wall like a trophy, puts the needle to the vinyl, and I realize that we had run into what may be the most ass-kicking rock band of 2003.

I've seen tons of bands that *wished* they were The Bronx. Most bands in the same genre strive to live up to an image of unadulterated attitude and come up short when they try to make music to match the outfits they scored from trendy thrift stores. But The Bronx is unequivocally the real deal. With buzzsaw guitars, powerful bass lines, singing reminiscent of the best Rollins-era Black Flag, and Jorma Vik's

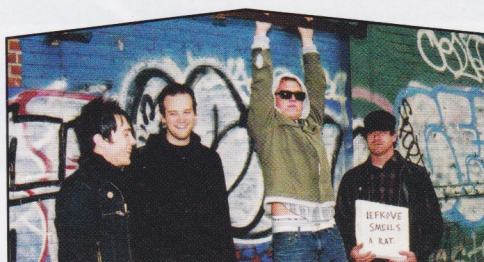


drumming that sounds like an angry neighbor tearing down your door with a baseball bat, in dead-on time. After two hometown shows in Los Angeles, every label wanted an in (one rumor is that a record executive sent the band an e-mail requesting a demo, saying, "Send me the rock!" and they literally sent him a rock).

Just a year after their inception, they are still playing their no-bullshit, full-on rock for Island Records, the home of Bon Jovi and Sum 41. Guitarist Joby Ford is quick to correct any preconceived notions: "It's bullshit when people hang onto this 'major labels are bad.' I don't give a fuck what people say. If it's good, it's good. If it sucks it sucks. Some of my favorite records came out on major labels."

Regardless, they put out the first The Bronx full-length as a split label release on their own imprint, White Drugs Records, and famed metal label, Ferret Records. The album's name is eponymous, but any of the song titles would have been choice: "Heart Attack American," "Gun Without Bullets," "They Will Kill Us All (Without Mercy)." Produced by Guns N' Roses guitarist Gilby Clarke, the album sounds like the celebratory soundtrack to a car accident. If *Appetite For Destruction* was L.A. in the '80's, these are the anthems of the post-dot-com crash, post-WTC, post-post L.A., where Ford says, "People don't give a shit about you. Nobody wants to talk about you. You're anonymous. It's cool."

I had to meet them in a Taco Bell, but it's likely you'll be able to see them soon. They tour incessantly and have no plans to stop. As Ford says, "It's cake. You drive, you setup, you play, you party. Bands that bitch about tour are pussies." In just a year they've crossed the country several times over with the quintessential bands from almost every loud rock sub-genre, including Rocket From The Crypt, The Circle Jerks, Social Distortion, and Dillinger Escape Plan. The combination of all those hallmark bands perfectly sums up The Bronx. They are the evolutionary and volatile combination of all of those bands. There are no calculated moves, no pretty boy poses, no \$100 jeans, no \$200 haircuts. "Fashion is bullshit. All my favorite bands are ugly and fat. Music is about music." And Taco Bell and sleeping in U-Hauls and car crashes and parking lot altercations and heroes. Good job guys. ■



THE  
BRONX



# MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD





# US BLOOD

It's not often that you'll hear a guy who plays guitar for a living say he hates guitar solos. It's even less likely that you'll find two guitarists who don't mind taking the subway from Brooklyn to a downtown Manhattan café to do an interview, just hours after one of them has had their wisdom teeth pulled. Most Precious Blood has come a long way from their days as the legendary NYHC band Indecision, and have endured numerous hardships, including multiple singers and so much van trouble that it would send some bands running for the unemployment lines. These days, they've got the added firepower of ex-One King Down frontman Rob Fusco, a new album on Trustkill Records, and are looking more unstoppable than ever.

When I sat down with guitarists Justin Brannan and Rachel Rosen the band's new album, *Our Lady Of Annihilation*, was causing an uproar even before a single copy had hit the streets. The controversy stems from the record's cover which depicts the Virgin Mary standing over the New York City skyline with sticks of dynamite wrapped around her torso. "The distributor was kind of worried about what the stores were going to say," Brannan told me. "I think they were worried people at Wal-Mart in Missouri weren't going to buy the album. To us it's like who fucking cares? If you're going to Wal-Mart to buy your hardcore records then you've got bigger problems." Several meetings with Trustkill's main distributor, RED, and countless Metrocards later, the band finally agreed to let the potentially offensive material, more specifically the dynamite, be covered up with a sticker in the larger stores and outlets. The vinyl pressing of the record will be available on Deathwish, Inc. and the copies that the band will sell on tours will not be censored. "There's nothing gross about the cover," says Rosen, "Most people are just like, 'who's that hot chick?'"

The compromise seems to have worked in favor of the band because they're getting their message across either way. Interestingly enough, my copy of *Our Lady Of Annihilation*, which came directly from Trustkill, came sporting a sticker from PETA encouraging people not to keep their dogs chained up outside. Probably because Brannan and Rosen are about as passionate about their pet pit bulls as they are about their band.

For those lucky enough to get a sticker-free copy of the CD, they will be able to see artist Justin Borucki's artwork in all its glory. "It's really about the lunacy [of] people killing in the name of God," says Brannan, "Also, the last few years of all [of] our lives have been getting pretty rough, losing friends and family. The thing about *Our Lady Of Annihilation* is about asking how can there be a God when all of these terrible things keep happening." This battle over the cover art was about more than just having an impressive layout. The band's music is close to them and it's good to see there are bands that still care enough about what they're doing to refuse censorship in lieu of commercial success.

One thing Most Precious Blood certainly hasn't been willing to compromise is their distinctly hardcore sound. For those who aren't familiar, MPB was once known as Indecision, whose first EP was recorded in 1993. Their heavy guitar riffs, staunch anti-religion stance, and original singer Tom Sheehan's screeching vocals made the band's records required listening to fans from New York and beyond. The decline of Indecision came when they parted ways with Sheehan and started a somewhat short stint with Artie Phillie (Millhouse) on vocals in the summer of 1998, just weeks after the band had released the *Most Precious Blood* LP. During their run, Indecision put out a considerable amount of Ebay-worthy seven inches and EPs as well as a few full lengths, all of which stayed true to the

band's sound and hardcore ideals.

Indecision broke up after their final full-length record, *Release The Cure*, which was produced by Roger Miret of Agnostic Front. A year later, Most Precious Blood rose from the broken pieces of Indecision, reuniting Brannan and Rosen with original singer Sheehan to record *Nothing In Vain*, which the band produced themselves. "A lot of these bands now, especially bigger bands, have people producing who just come in and rewrite all of their stuff. Maybe it's for the better and it might bring the best out of you, but I don't think I could do that," says Brannan.

But history has a tendency to repeat itself and things deteriorated in the lead singer department, even with a successful record under their belts. "Right around the time we kicked Tom out, we had reached a stalemate," says Brannan. "We weren't writing songs. We were just playing a lot of shows."

The band got back on track when they acquired their new frontman, Rob Fusco, formerly of the Albany hardcore band One King Down. "My roommate actually suggested him," says Rosen. "He was bouncing off the walls of his house in Boston," Brannan tells me. "He came down during the giant snowstorm last February and we were locked in a house for the week so we decided to jam on a few Gorilla Biscuits songs. It sounded good so we just said you're in." The band barely missed a step in their touring schedule, throwing their new mic wielder from the practice room into the fire of the pits. "He pretty much got his audition on the road," says Brannan. Fusco passed with flying colors. Rosen says, "We knew how he was on stage. It was just a matter of whether or not we would get along with him in the band." She laughs, "He's a maniac."

The band has gotten along well enough to produce their aforementioned sophomore LP for Trustkill and continue playing shows to an ever-growing fan base. All seemed well in Gotham City until just recently when they found out that drummer Sean McCann had left the band. According to Rosen, they woke up one morning and McCann was gone. "After living together for two years straight with touring and stuff, and for him to just leave like that really hurt. He just left a note on the van that said, 'sell my drums, I can't play music any more.'" Brannan continues, "I was in the shower and Rachel was banging on the door yelling 'Sean's gone!'" They had not only lost a drummer, but a close friend. "At some points he was the most excited about the band," says Brannan, "I can only hope now that he threw this away, he will actually go and work out what he has to work out."

In true hardcore fashion the band hopped on tour immediately, sans drummer, all the way to Arizona. "We had to," says Rosen. "The [promoters] had already paid for our plane tickets and stuff. We couldn't tell them no." Luckily they were able to get someone to fill in for the shows and another of their friends is filling in for their tour with Sick Of It All this winter.

Chances are that whomever the band acquires as a permanent replacement will receive the band's signature tattoo of "For Those I Love I Will Sacrifice." The words are lyrics from Indecision's song "Hallowed Be Thy Name" and the band even posts pictures of people's ink on their website. Recently the web page displayed someone who had gone so far as to get the album art from *Our Lady Of Annihilation* etched into his forearms. "He wasn't even anyone that we knew before that" says Brannan, "We were just like, we hope you like the album." I wonder if they'll make him put stickers over his arms when he goes into Wal-Mart. ■





# THE TOP

# 15 GUITARISTS

ROLLING STONE

## COULD GIVE A SHIT ABOUT...

*Rolling Stone* recently ran a feature on their "The 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time." All the usual suspects were on there. Everyone from Eric Clapton to Kurt Cobain to Jimi Hendrix made the list. While there were a few surprises—Greg Ginn for one—for the most part, the list was very cut and dry, and any frat-boy classic rock radio fan could speculate around 75% of those who made it just by guess work (well, maybe Jack White at #17 was a little unexpected).

These guitarists are all good in their own unique way, and have left an indelible mark on modern music. But, for every one who made *Rolling Stone's* list, there is someone who has pushed the envelope and taken the instrument to uncharted territory who was overlooked. While Dillinger Escape Plan, Shai Hulud, and the Bad Brains may not have the collective album sales of The Red Hot Chili Peppers under their belts, they have nonetheless worked hard to shape and

reshape entire genres and subcultures as they pertain to mastery of the six-string.

As *Law of Inertia's* resident gearhead, I feel something has to be done to remedy this situation. From October to December we had *Law of Inertia* readers vote for their favorite guitarists *Rolling Stone* ignored. Of course, we ignored the 189 combined votes Joe Satriani and Steve Vai received and shaved off the fat to bring you this list. You picked them, so here are your choices! [Aaron Lefkove]

### EL HEFE: NOFX



**Hot Chops:** "Perfect Government" - *Punk In Drublic*

**Genre:** Socially Conscious Comedy Punk

**Shred Report:** In addition to handling occasional vocal and trumpet duties for NOFX, El Hefe remains one of the better guitarists in punk rock. Anyone who has perused the NOFX catalog knows they have exacting standards for their guitarists. Fat Mike put them through a style-hopping set that includes ska, hardcore punk, pop, and sometimes even a bit of jazz. Hefe may not be as flashy as his counterpart, Eric Melvin, but witness him live and you'll see that he nails every single note perfectly while singing like Louis Armstrong before switching to a reggae trumpet solo. It's no wonder Hefe comes from a jazz background and does not have the punk pedigree that the rest of his band does. The end result is Hefe is one of the most versatile guitarists in underground rock who can play any genre perfectly and convincingly and NOFX remains one of the tightest outfits to set the standard for technical ability and professional sound in punk rock. [RS]

### IAN MACKAYE: FUGAZI



**Hot Chops:** "Repeater" - *Repeater*

**Genre:** Post-whatever

**Shred Report:** Most people would settle for redefining rock music once in their lives, but Ian MacKaye has done it twice. While his vocal presence in Minor Threat helped reorient a floundering genre, it's his guitar playing that MacKaye has made the bulk and breadth of his musical statements. From the tribal urgency of *Repeater* to the almost funkdefied sarcasm of *Red Medicine*, MacKaye's mastery of texture and constant innovation have helped Fugazi set ridiculously high standards in the world of post-core. Despite his aversion to stardom and pop commodification, MacKaye's influence is everywhere; from Refused to Sparta to Hot Water Music to basements and garages all over the world. His guitar work is blue chip, acknowledged reverently as essential listening. Simultaneously airy and brutal, angular but smooth, cacophonous but anthemic, MacKaye proves that you don't have to play mosh metal on 10 to be aggressive. [Ronen Kauffman]

### MARS VOLTA: OMAR RODRIGUEZ



**Hot Chops:** "Inertiac" - *De-Loused In The Comatorium*

**Genre:** Progressive, psychedelic hardcore

**Shred Report:** After countless tours playing to nobody, At The Drive-In got a few big breaks which unfortunately came on the verge of their demise. Subsequently, they became the "it" band for everyone from pretentious rock journalists to shaggy haired indie snobs all across the country. Behind charismatic front man Cedric Bixler was skinny six-stringer Omar Rodriguez. At The Drive-In's post hardcore attack was merely the first chapter of Rodriguez's legacy. Upon their breakup, Rodriguez and Bixler formed Mars Volta, a band as deeply rooted in hardcore as in their own Chicano heritage. Embraced by critics and fans alike as the post-hardcore Led Zeppelin, Rodriguez continues to lead the band through nightly sprawling epic jam sessions lasting well over an hour. They may only play four songs per set these days, but with each one clocking in at upwards of 20 minutes, no one's complaining. [Aaron Lefkove]

### DR. KNOW: BAD BRAINS



**Hot Chops:** "Re-Ignition" - *I Against I*

**Genre:** Rastafarian Progressive Punk Reggae

**Shred Report:** It's a safe bet that every guitarist on this page will cite Dr. Know as an influence. What happens when four black inner-city DC youths discover punk rock, Rastafarianism, and copious amounts of ganja? Fast, sloppy, and ahead of their time, the group juxtaposed their hardcore tunes with smooth stoned out reggae jams, jazz, punk, and metal. Dr. Know's playing would revolutionize the hardcore scene and single handedly introduce these heretofore taboo elements into the music. The four original members of the band still continue on to this very day, and Dr Know has produced and played on albums with everyone from Warzone to Scream to Coheed And Cambria. [Aaron Lefkove]

### TEPPEI TERANISHI: THRICE

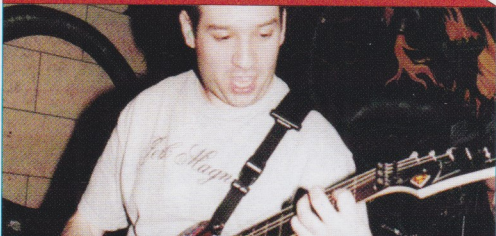


**Hot Chops:** "Kill Me Quickly" - *The Illusion Of Safety*

**Genre:** Pop-punk screamo metal

**Shred Report:** It's pretty easy to write Thrice off as just another dime-a-dozen pop punk band, especially since they're popping up on T.V.s all over. But, this Orange County foursome has something American Hi-Fi can only dream of: Teppei Teranishi, one of the most technically sound metal guitarists to grace the modern airwaves. From the time the band started jamming after high school to their major label deal with Island, Teranishi's dense, layered chords have set Thrice apart from the other bands playing at the skate park and give the band some serious metal cred. Thrice may never be Metallica, but as long as his band is in the spotlight, Teranishi will do his best to spread his rock gospel to the masses. [Matt Neatoek]

### MATT FOX: SHAI HULUD



**Hot Chops:** "Set Your Body Ablaze" - *A Whole New Level Of Sickness* (split with Another Victim)

**Genre:** Misanthropic melodic metalcore

**Shred Report:** Metalcore giants Shai Hulud didn't invent the style, but on their two albums they raised the bar a little higher. While their contemporaries were content to sit back and breakdown muted E chords, Fox and his various co-guitarists demolished walls with their attack of intricately fingered chords and complexly-layered fretwork. Fox says modestly, "On my best day, I'm an average guitar player. Thinking, working, re-thinking, scrapping entirely, working, thinking, and re-working again compensates for my lack of ability to shred like my favorite guitarists." Fox is continuing with two new bands, The Warmth Of Red Blood and Zombie Apocalypse. [Aaron Lefkove]



## JADE PUGET: AFI



**Hot Chops:** "Sacrifice Theory" - *Art Of Drowning*

**Genre:** Goth punk goes gets a dose of hardcore  
**Shred Report:** By the time Jade Puget was 19, he could create a wall of sound on his guitar with his eyes closed. Before joining the AFI crew in 1997, this raven-haired vegetarian was a part of Redemption 87 and Loose Change, two influential early '90's California hardcore bands in which he honed his skills as a guitarist and performer. Although to some fans he may play second fiddle to heartthrob/vocalist Davey Havok, Puget has shined since his work on his first AFI album *Black Sails In The Sunset*. Armed with his trusty Les Paul, Puget shows the younger punkers how it's done right. Unlike many other mall punk sensations, his dynamic range is incredible. He can play lightning fast palm-muted hardcore and then effortlessly strum ballads like "God Called In Sick Today" on *Black Sails*. [Rebecca Swanner]

## TIM ARMSTRONG: RANCID



**Hot Chops:** "Roots Radicals" - *...And Out Come The Wolves*

**Genre:** Clash-inspired punk rock

**Shred Report:** From his early days in Operation Ivy to lead guitarist in the street-punk revivalists, Rancid, this East Bay punk has carved out a name for himself as one of the genre's best guitarists and his band has had a tremendous influence on groups from the Explosion to Good Charlotte. In 1997, Armstrong took his musical knowledge a step further and started his own label, Hellcat, and eventually signed the legendary Joe Strummer. These days he's collaborating with mainstream artists like Pink and Avril Lavigne, but we suppose that he has to put all that talent somewhere. Maybe he's got the right spark to give pop the edge it's been missing. Armstrong plays ska, punk, and hardcore better than anyone. [Rebecca Swanner]

## BEN WEINMAN: DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN



**Hot Chops:** "Destro's Secret" - *Calculating Infinity*

**Genre:** Progressive grindcore

**Shred Report:** Having helped the Dillinger Escape Plan rocket to the forefront of modern metal, Ben Weinman never fails to astonish. A demonstration of his skill is an absolute spectacle— with seemingly effortless precision, the guy can cram more sweeps, chugs, and time-changes into one song than most guitarists will play in a whole set. His affinity for both the experimental and the brutal has allowed him to sculpt compositions that are simultaneously intricate, elegant, and chockingly heavy. Stupefying and sophisticated, his playing represents something genuinely new and fascinating in the world of aggressive music, and beyond. Weinman's frenetic and calculated vision has cemented him as a true innovator. Don't fuck with him. [Ronen Kauffman]

## DAVE KNUDSON: BOTCH



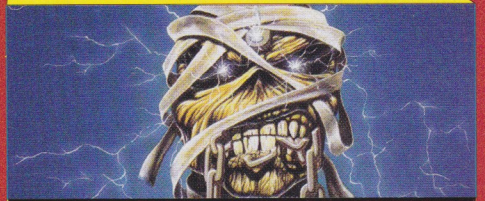
**Hot Chops:** "C. Thomas Howell As The 'Soul Man'" - *We Are The Romans*

**Genre:** Mathy metal nuclear war

**Shred Report:** Towards the end of the '90's the Pacific Northwest experienced a major boom in aggro metalcore. Alongside lesser knowns like Himsa and Trial, Botch led the wave with their off-kilter brand of musical brutality. Aided by a Line 6 delay pedal, Knudson would loop and layer his own riffs, creating a virtual sound collage before the band would come in full force and pulverize the crowd. On record, Botch are just as unforgiving, due in no small part to Knudson's unrelenting blasts of off-time sonic fury. *We Are The Romans* has gone on to become synonymous with the sound of modern hardcore, and has become a reference point for every math-metal group since. [Aaron Lefkove]

# DYMANIC DUOS

## IRON MAIDEN



**Name:** Adrian Smith/Dave Murray

**Hot Chops:** "Run To The Hills" from *The Number Of The Beast* (Sony, 1982)

**File Under:** New wave of British heavy metal

**Shred Report:** Cited as influential by everyone from Metallica to Thrive to Sum 41, Iron Maiden carved out a sound all to themselves. Dueling solos played in octaves, awkward time signatures, and a decomposing corpse named Eddie are just a few of their trademarks.

## SLAYER



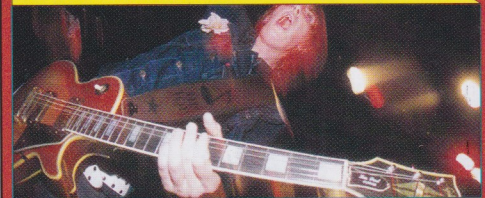
**Name:** Kerry King/Jeff Hanneman

**Hot Chops:** "Raining Blood" from *Reign In Blood* (Universal, 1986)

**File Under:** Purveyors of thrash

**Shred Report:** Possibly the second most famous metal riff of all time (second only to "Iron Man"), King and Hanneman rip through this album at a blistering pace. *Reign In Blood*, and the speed at which the duo shredded, was a real turning point for thrash metal.

## TURBONEGRO



**Name:** Euroboy/RuneRebellion

**Hot Chops:** "Prince Of The Rodeo" from *Apocalypse Dudes* (Epitaph, 1999)

**File Under:** Sailor Deathpunk

**Shred Report:** Turbonegro live, sleep, and eat rock and roll. Rune Rebellion and Euroboy's chops helped to propel the band from their simple '70's punk sound to the bombastic, over the top rock machine they are today. Norway never rocked so hard.

## GUNS N' ROSES



**Name:** Slash/Izzy Stradlin

**Hot Chops:** "Welcome To The Jungle" from *Appetite For Destruction*

**File Under:** Rock (with a capital 'R')

**Shred Report:** Even more recognizable than his trademark curly black hair and top hat, Slash's opening lick introduced the world to the band which would come to be formidable legends and produce at least one awesome tribute compilation.

- 11) Billie Joe Armstrong: Green Day
- 12) East Bay Ray: Dead Kennedys
- 13) Slash: Guns N' Roses (no, he wasn't on *Rolling Stone's* list)
- 14) Synyster Gates: Avenged Sevenfold
- 15) Brett Gurewitz: Bad Religion

## Law of Inertia Staff Picks

**Ross Siegel:**

Dr. Know: Bad Brains  
D. Boon: The Minutemen  
Chris: Propagandhi  
El Hefe: NOFX  
Larry Lalonde: Primus

**Aaron Lefkove:**

John Christ: Danzig

Eddie Lynch: Bad Wizard  
Rossington/King/Collins: Lynyrd Skynyrd  
Euroboy: Turbonegro  
**Rebecca Swanner:**  
Lars Frederiksen: Rancid  
Liz Phair  
Tim Cossar: Give Up the Ghost  
Joe Strummer  
Joan Jett



# *The Status of* *Gay*





by Georgi Goldman

hey promised Val Kilmer and Carmen Electra. What they delivered were the "stars" of *Queer Eye For The Straight Guy*. The scene? A launch party for the Von Dutch clothing label in New York, and the venue, Show, was swarming with B-list celebrities. Drinks were flowing and the club was crowded with enough good music and paparazzi flash bulbs to know that I was some place at least a little special, if not fun.

*Queer Eye* guy, Kyan Douglas (grooming), arrived fashionably late, and sat himself in the small, elevated VIP area. Fellow *Queer* guy, Thom Filicia (interior design), joined him. As they schmoozed with each other and their guests, some members of the press meandered up to the makeover kings (or queens) making small talk. When one reporter asked Douglas for advice about lip balm, the B-

list diva flipped. "Get the fucking press out of here!" he screamed. A scene ensued after bitching that he was exhausted from shooting in New Jersey all day. Reports in New York publications later that week lashed into the grooming guru for his hissy fit, and for being unkind to the press that has embraced him and made him a star.

Douglas, and many others in the media, seem to think that



Design and illustration by Neil Jamieson



Queer is here and we better get used to it. If you're gay (and not in the "I Feel Pretty" sort of way) your train to fame is running express these days. Homosexuality may be heading the way of chain wallets and trucker hats. In other words, homosexuality is going mainstream. For all of the telltale signs, we need look no further than the entertainment industry.

In its fourth season, *Will & Grace*, a sitcom about a gay man, his wacky straight female best friend, and their compatriots, was given the mainstream crown of approval when Debra Messing won the Emmy for "Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series" in 2003. With Messing's win, each of the four cast members can now claim ownership of an Emmy. "Take Me Out," a play about a gay baseball player, won the 2003 Tony for best play. The cable network Bravo is bringing gay men to the forefront of American pop culture, or at least giving them solid B-list celebrity status, with shows like *Boy Meets Boy* and *Queer Eye For The Straight Guy*. And who knows, with *Queer Eye* making the jump to NBC, airing between episodes of *Will & Grace* and *ER*, perhaps even A-list TV status is on the horizon.

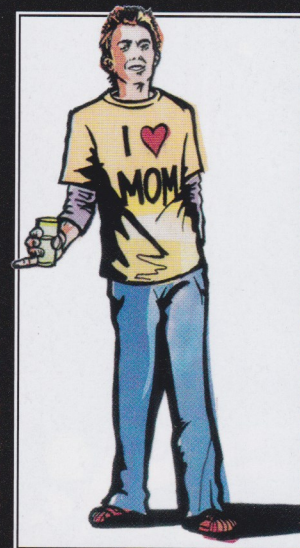
There are also signposts within politics and the legal system. Much to Bill O'Reilly's disgust, last June the Supreme Court overturned a Texas ban against gay sodomy. And despite protesters who traveled across the country to picket its opening, the Harvey Milk School began classes as a full-fledged high school for gay teenagers in New York City this past Fall. Most recently, in November, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decided that gay couples have the right to marry under the state's constitution, a ruling which will likely have ramifications in other states and in the upcoming presidential election.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Let's look at an election that actually had more Americans voting than the last presidential race: the *American Idol* finale. For

when asked "Who is your American idol?" Clay remains true to form: "My mother is the strongest person I know." Now ask any gay man if he was close to his mother growing up and if he would consider himself a mama's boy— you won't be surprised by the answer.

Mr. Aiken's fans, known as Claymates, are a fiercely loyal group. 8,500 of them gathered in Clay's hometown of Raleigh, NC to watch the final episode of *American Idol*. When Clay lost, the FCC was flooded with hundreds of letters complaining that the *American Idol* voting process was fixed. Groups traveled from North Carolina to Atlantic City by caravan to watch Clay perform at the Miss America pageant. One New York-based Claymate in her 60's was sure that Clay wasn't gay. "Maybe asexual, but not gay," she said. "I know gay. I was just in Chelsea and I know what gay looks like. Maybe Ruben is gay, but not Clay."

When it comes to gay-ness in the entertainment industry, dubious distinctions are the norm. Winning first prize in the "I haven't come out of the closet but everyone knows I should" category, is David Gest, famous both for his short-lived marriage to Liza Minnelli, and for



having the worst plastic surgery since Michael Jackson. Let's look into why this man, who everyone had always taken to be a homosexual, would get married and to Liza Minnelli no less. Perhaps it was a desperate attempt by Gest to attain a deeper sense of intimacy with Judy Garland, an icon for gay men the world over, who also happens to be Minnelli's mother.

After a much-publicized wedding and a failed reality show, Minnelli and Gest separated. He then sued her for abuse, saying Minnelli used to beat him during alcoholic fits of rage. She of course counter-sued. Since admitting that Liza Minnelli beat you up has to rank as one of the most embarrassing stories possible, it's safe to assume that Gest was probably after just one thing all along: money.

As everyone knows, if you have a lot of money, it doesn't really matter if you're gay or straight (or dumb or a crook or a drug addict, for that matter). Case in point: Rosie O'Donnell. The talk-show queen's disclosure that she is a lesbian— a shock to only a handful of housewives in the Midwest— was not only a lifestyle choice, but a career move as well. Even though the public seemed to turn against America's "cutie patootie," Rosie chose to end her talk show before it ended her. She has since moved on to producing Broadway shows about other gay performers and making regular appearances in court fighting Gruner & Jahr USA, publisher of her failed magazine, *Rosie*.

*If you're gay your train to fame is running express these days. Homosexuality may be heading the way of chain wallets and trucker hats. In other words, gay is going mainstream.*

runner-up Clay Aiken, just the aura of homosexuality has helped his cause. He denies being gay, but rumor has it that Fox executives tried to promote Ruben Studdard during the pop-singing reality competition because Clay came off as "too gay." Despite placing second to Studdard, Clay graced the cover of *Rolling Stone* before Ruben, sold more singles than Ruben, and has spawned a movement known as Claymania. One weighty sign of Clay's possible same-sex affinity is his membership in the "mama's boy" club. On the *American Idol* web site,



Rosie's odd fascination with Tom Cruise raises another odor in the homosexual air: superstars who are unaffected by rumors of being gay. I tried contacting Mr. Cruise to see if he thought homosexuality was becoming mainstream and how he thinks his career has been affected, or not, by these rumors. A Cruise PR director finally left me a message. She thanked me for the request for my book (I guess she chose to ignore the three faxes and one email specifically detailing the publication I write for), but said that Mr. Cruise was unavailable. She deftly ignored my inquiry about Cruise's sexual preference.

Not everyone, however, is jumping on the "being gay is so cool and could possibly benefit my career" bandwagon. Rumors abound about Seann William Scott, the actor who plays the womanizing meathead of *American Pie* and the dim-witted surfer of *Dude Where's My Car?* One employee of *Saturday Night Live* reported that Scott was accompanied by a companion when he hosted SNL last year. "His boyfriend didn't leave his side the entire taping," the employee said. "They were inseparable." When asked about this rumor, Scott's publicist

young lady at the Slide explained. Think about what we often associate with homosexuality: flamboyance, shopping, all-night partying. Even the word "gay" means happy. Gay life does not seem bound by many

*Let's look at an election that actually had more Americans voting than the presidential race: The American Idol finale. For runner-up Clay Aiken, just the aura of homosexuality has helped his cause.*



of our restrictive cultural dictates. Henry Bergstein, a filmmaker and former casting agent in his twenties, said that as a gay man, he can pursue a lot more paths in life because he is not obliged to follow any specific set of rules. "There are so many more possibilities for a gay man," Bergstein said. "I don't have to go to college and then get a job and get married and have kids. I can do whatever I choose, have as many partners as I like. And it's not necessarily wrong." This pattern can apply to activities outside of the bedroom as well. As an example, Bergstein cites his own life. He recently began pursuing a certification in personal training, even though he holds both an Ivy League and a post-graduate degree.

returned my phone call faster than you can say damage control. "He's not gay," the publicist asserted. "That's all I can say."

But outside the *American Pie* universe, homosexuality is the hottest of trends. "Metrosexual" is a new term referring to high maintenance straight men that like to groom, shop, and moisturize. *New York Magazine* (Sept. 22, 2003) reported that Alec Baldwin wanted to work on his softer side. "Basically I'm gay," said Baldwin, "except for the sex with men part." In August, in the *Time Out New York* sex advice column, a straight man wrote in saying that he wanted to be gay so he could have "lots of sex," be thought of as a "fashion maven," and be surrounded by women who want to hang out with him.

On any given Saturday night, throngs of young, attractive women crowd the dance floor at The Slide, a gay bar in New York that features drag shows at 1am and 3am. A 25-year-old gay stylist, dressed in a baseball cap, retro button down shirt, and limited edition Adidas, tried to explain why non-homosexuals hang out at places like The Slide. "The only reason they come here is because their gay friends drag them here— or they're weird," he said, puffing on a cigarette. Just then, a group of women marched right past the trendy (and heterosexual) Bowery Bar, and eased on into The Slide, "but if they have a good time, then more power to 'em."

And that's part of it. Gay culture seems so enjoyable. "It's fun here and you know there will always be good music to dance to," one

The perception of the "fun gay man" is a common stereotype played out in the media. But a lot of gay men are not amused by this portrayal. "[Homosexuality] has been made more acceptable to America, but the model is a heteronormative one," says Bergstein. "It's only allowing that a gay couple wants to have sex together, but otherwise they want to be like you, when in fact there are a lot more possibilities." While Bergstein admits that the exposure in the media is helpful, he thinks it can be a double-edged sword. "There is a reaction against this mainstream model within the gay community." Bergstein has trouble identifying what an acceptable portrayal of homosexuality in the media would be. He allows that the character of Jack on *Will & Grace* leads an alternative lifestyle: he doesn't have a job yet still has money, he goes out a lot, and he dates lots of different people. Jack is outside of the heterosexual norm, but the problem, Bergstein said, is that he's a huge stereotype. "Stereotypes impose things on the gay lifestyle that are just too rigid," he concluded.

Regardless, it is impossible not to say that homosexuality has made tremendous crossroads into mainstream American culture in the last 30 years. The acceptance of gay culture that began in places like California and New York during the '70's has continued to expand and now with gay role models showing up in the mainstream media, perhaps it won't be long until we see a growing level of acceptance of being gay in the last bastion of nuclear family, 1950's ideology, Middle America. ■



# ALKALINE TRIO

## HOW MATT SKIBA GREW UP TO BE COOL

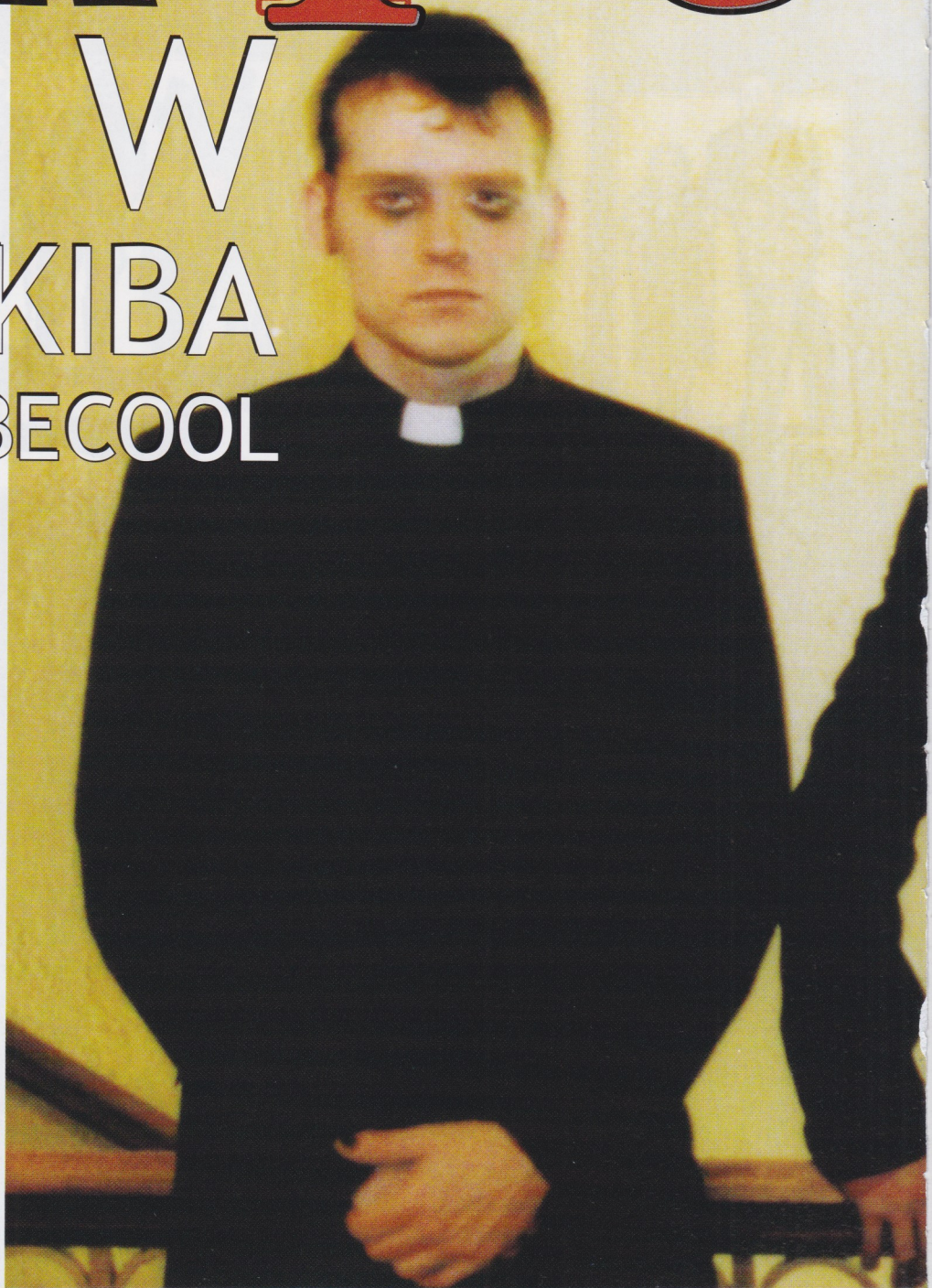
**WORDS:** REBECCA SWANNER

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** KEVIN WEINSTEIN

One morning, when Matt Skiba was five years old, his mother found him crying to himself. It wasn't a temper tantrum over a broken action figure or not getting his way, but more of a quiet, choked-up cry that comes from fear of disappointment. "She asked me why I was crying," says Skiba, lead singer of the Alkaline Trio. "I told her, 'you're going to be ashamed of me when I became a garbageman.'" He admired the manly men who came to his home and took the trash and he wanted to be one of them. "They were really nice guys. I would run down to the end of the driveway and talk to them, stand up on the truck and watch them crush the garbage. I was like, 'Those guys are cool. I want to be like them.'"

Matthew Skiba, 28, was born in McHenry, a suburb northwest of Chicago, the son of two Vietnam Vets. Skiba's mother, Joan, was determined to instill an appreciation for music in her three children. Skiba found himself in awe of the rock bands he saw on television. "[They] made me think how cool it would be to be in a rock band, but it seemed so out of the realm of possibility."

By the time he was in high school, he was slowly on his way to achieving that lofty dream. He learned how to play the bass, drums, and saxophone and applied his talents on the skins to the band (before Alkaline Trio formed, he played drums for "Chicago's most hated band," The Traitors)) he was in during high school. Although it wouldn't come in handy immediately, Skiba













also taught himself how to play the guitar. "I've always been in love with music, [but] even with guitar I probably won't blow many minds. I like songwriting," he offers.

An elementary school teacher jump-started Skiba's love of creative writing early on. "In first or second grade we had journals where half the pages were blank with lines underneath. Every day in your journal, you'd draw a picture and then write about it. Every morning I would wake up and jump out of bed to go write. I loved it." He now keeps a pen and his journal with him almost all the time. It serves as both a diary and sketchbook, filled with his doodles, his creative writing, and a log of the cool (and mundane) things that happen to him on a daily basis. Unlike other, more private writers, Skiba isn't terribly worried about his Emily the Strange journal being pillaged for personal information. "I don't think anyone gives a shit about reading it... it is not very exciting stuff."

As a young punk, Skiba listened to Black Flag, Bad Religion and The Circle Jerks, as well as "all the Dischord stuff and a lot of the California [punk]. We would buy anything on Dischord from Minor Threat to Grey Matter to Severin to Slant 6. I love Slant 6." Skiba also developed respect for the lighter side of punk, like Green Day, whose influence would resurface through the often strangely upbeat music of the Alkaline Trio. "I fell in love with [Green Day] the first time I heard them. We'd drive all over the place to go see them and sneak into shows because they were sold out."

After graduating from high school, Skiba, very much in love with music but still hesitant to pursue a career as a rock star, attended Chicago's prestigious College of Art and Design for graphic arts. "It was incredible. I loved what I did, but it was so easy. In some of my classes I would get straight A's and never show up because I was getting stoned with my teacher. It was too much fun. It was like, I'm supposed to be doing something with myself." After a year, he dropped out, got a job as a bike messenger, and started devoting his time toward music.

Pursuing a dream isn't always easy. Not only did he have to put up with the miserable lake effect weather of the Windy City, but, during his three and a half years as a messenger, he got hit by several cars while on duty. "I'm disfigured because of it. My right shoulder is totally out of place. Whenever I have my shirt off, you can [see] I'm totally off-center. My right collarbone sticks completely out of my shoulder."

Still, there were advantages to the position. "I needed a job I could leave at any time to do band stuff and still have a job when I got back. If someone fired me I could just move on to a different company." Plus, as Skiba fondly recalls, "there were some offices where there were these beautiful women. You'd come in out of the rain and see them. Ideas would come into my head that never became true... I think a few of us were a little delusional that people found bike messengers attractive."

It was during those years that Skiba almost headed down a path that would have almost certainly boosted his luck with the ladies. He had planned on going to fire school and becoming a fireman or an EMT. He's seen his share of "some pretty fucked up shit" including someone having a seizure and someone else getting shot in the face, experiences that would have prepared him for a career in saving lives. Yet Skiba admits he doesn't have a strong stomach. "Actually, I get grossed out pretty easily, but your adrenaline takes over [and] I just felt I was one of those people who could turn it off to help somebody out."

Instead, he chose to help people through song. Using the music and writing skills he learned as a child, he formed the Alkaline Trio with childhood friend and bassist Rob Doran in 1997. Playing guitar in the Alkaline Trio was Skiba's first experience as an axeman, allowing him to put those self-taught skills to the test.

Just before the release of their first EP, *For Your Lungs Only*, on Asian Man Records, Doran departed on friendly terms, and Dan Andriano from ska-punk band Slapstick, stepped in to fill his spot. Andriano had been playing bass and singing for emo-rock pioneers, Tuesday, and released a

great record also on Asian Man Records called *Freewhelin*, before unceremoniously breaking up. Andriano and Skiba connected immediately and their vision began to take shape with some highly acclaimed shows in Chicago. The band soon called their van home and quickly started to win fans all over the nation.

After dropping two full-length albums on Asian Man, Andriano and Skiba threw out their drummer, Glenn Porter, and brought in Mike Felumlee from the Smoking Popes to record their next album, *From Here To Infirmary*. This record would be their break-through release, selling over 120,000 copies world wide on punk-rock über label, Vagrant Records. Tours with Blink-182 soon followed and the band caused a sensation everywhere they went. Their success exceeded their wildest dreams— Andriano got an SUV and a house in the suburbs, Skiba found himself a

rockstar in Chicago as people he didn't even know would stop on the street at point in his direction. But, Skiba and Felumlee's relations strained and in 2001, Andriano and Skiba began their search for a replacement to fill the void. Enter Derek Grant.

Grant grew up around the city of Detroit, Michigan surrounded by music and musicians. His mother played piano at the house and his father played drums in top 40 bar bands. By the age of five Grant was already performing alongside his dad onstage. "I started banging on the drums when I was two years old. Until I started sitting down at the drums on my own, it was me on my father's lap. He would work the pedals and I would just bang on stuff. When I started playing drums on my own, I never really knew how to use my feet, because I never incorporated

that before so I had to start from scratch," Grant recalls. "That kind of continues to this day. I tend to use my arms more than my legs."

Before joining the Alkaline Trio, Grant, who almost joined The Misfits with his childhood stage name "Reaper, Child of Evil," had played in numerous bands including The Vandals, The Suicide Machines, and Face To Face (with whom he played guitar). In 1994, Grant met Andriano at Fireside Bowl, a local Chicago venue. Andriano was playing bass in Slapstick at the time and Grant was part of The Suicide Machines. Later, in 1999, when he was playing guitar in Face To Face he met Skiba. They kept in touch for two years and then, he says, "I finally got a phone call saying they needed a drummer."

Over the next few weeks, Grant learned the songs on Alkaline Trio's three albums. He then hopped on Amtrak in Detroit and headed to Chicago to meet with the two and start work on the new record, *Good Mourning*. "At the first practice we wrote a new song and about a week later we went into the studio and recorded it." He



says, "I spent a lot of time learning *From Here To Infirmary* only to get down there and work on brand new material."

Despite the insanity at first, Grant loves his new home with the band. "All the years in between playing with The Suicide Machines and playing with Alkaline Trio I was filling in for other people. That was a bit awkward because I was trying to fill somebody's shoes on a temporary basis and didn't have any strong connection to the band or to the material. I never really knew my place in the group and I started to miss that bond with the group you're playing with and are

able to contribute artistically to. That's something I feel more with Alkaline Trio than I have with any other band."

Also, as a part of a trio, Grant has a more prominent position than he did with physically larger groups. "With a lot of bands I've played with, you're in the back and your job is to keep the beat going. With the Trio I feel like I am the balance between the bass and the guitar."

Although Andriano, Skiba, and Grant are good friends, Skiba moved to California not long after Grant joined the group. His reason? "The nice, cold city of Chicago is a beautiful place. I lived there my

whole life and it kept getting smaller and smaller. I needed a breath of fresh air and San Francisco has very fresh air."

When Skiba first moved to the West Coast, he lived in Berkeley, California with a large group of his friends. That year, on Halloween night he was playing a show in Chicago when he got a call that the house caught fire. He was told that while his cat, Olive, and all of his friends were okay, he had nowhere to live when he returned to California. Thankfully, his valuable possessions were with him at the time (namely, his guitar).

Now he lives in Nob Hill, in the

heart of San Francisco where he composes songs in his apartment on his acoustic guitar, partially to be respectful to his neighbors and partially because he's emulating one of his other favorite musicians, Ani DiFranco. "I love her albums, but after *Up Up Up* I just feel like it collapsed. I still think Ani's great." A few years ago, Skiba had a chance to meet her. "I said 'hello' to her but I was too shy to talk to her. I was so in love with her. Just obsessed with her. [I was like] 'If she really knew me, man, we could be together.' Totally delusional. So when I saw her, I choked up, said hello, and walked away. Even growing up I was never very good

at approaching those I looked up to." His difficulty may be rooted in the way he loves stars. "I love glossy pictures of celebrities. I'm a 14-year-old girl or something."

Skiba's love of movie stars seems to run almost as deep as his love for their numerous films that Alkaline Trio songs have been inspired by. "*Amelie* is one of the best movies that has ever been made. I like anything that is well done. Romantic comedies are mostly pretty shitty. Recently, most [of them] have that Jennifer Lopez/Ben Affleck thing happening and I think she's a beautiful woman but it just doesn't hold water if you're a bitch. You're suddenly not as pretty anymore." Of course, Skiba also loves a slew of scary movies. According to Skiba, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen* influenced "All On Black" and "We've Had Enough" (*Good Mourning*) because he finds the romantic way the films portray the character of Satan attractive.

The members of Alkaline Trio are not Satanists, although Skiba does hold a great deal of respect for the founder of the Church of Satan, Anton LaVey. In his living room, hanging over his couch, he has a painting of LaVey done by Mark Gustalvo, who drew the cover for NOFX's *Heavy Petting Zoo*. He's read everything LaVey's written and recommends the biography *Secret Life Of A Satanist* by LaVey's life partner, Blanche Barton. Skiba's love of LaVey can be partially attributed to the way his parents raised him: open-minded and thoughtful. He says, "[Satanism] is more of an anti-religion than a religion. It's the same reason I like old punk rock. It challenges people. It turns the norm into the weird. It makes people happy and it pisses the right people off."

He recalls an episode from the Alkaline Trio's last tour that highlights his frustration with ignorance. "We were standing in line at this Mediterranean restaurant in Florida and this guy walks over and [asks] 'Is there any reason we're all wearing black?' I was like, 'Yeah, we're all Satanists.' He looked at me like somebody had started choking him. It's like fuck you, man." He continues, "[those] people are content with putting a flag on their car and [saying] everything's fine and we're proud Americans. That's blind patriotism and blind faith and [it] shows an extreme [lack] of intelligence."

Grant similarly finds this follow-the-leader mentality upsetting. "One of the reasons I connect with George Romero's films [director of *Night Of The Living Dead* and *Dawn Of The Dead*] is [because of] the analogies made between the zombies and the living. I think that's an important social message for a horror film. Do I believe in zombies? Sure. I believe a majority of the world are zombies and don't even know it."

Skiba blames President Bush for increasing the deer-in-the-headlights attitude of Americans and hopes that he won't be elected to a second term. "If Bush got re-elected I'd be moving to Vancouver in a heartbeat. I've never met a Canadian I didn't like," he quips. Also, as a California citizen, Skiba is stuck with Arnold Schwarzenegger as his governor for the next few years. "I don't see him as much of a threat [but] it's just sad that someone can attack and basically rape women and can come out years later and say I did that and I'm sorry and get elected. There are people in prison serving time for that. If you're going to have these laws why is he any different?"

While the Alkaline Trio isn't going to go leap into a career in politics, they're trying to make things a bit better through their music. Using a backdrop of darkness and humor like their predecessors The Misfits and The Cramps, they're trying to transform their fans from zombies into thinking citizens. As Grant says, "I could play The Misfits as a kid and people wouldn't think twice about it [because] it sounds fairly normal until you start paying attention to what they're saying. Then, it's very subversive. Hopefully that shows in our music."

And what ever became of Skiba's dream of becoming a garbageman? Was it crushed from the outset by his parents? Or did he just find his calling on his own accord? "My parents told me they thought I would be the best garbageman in the world." Nothing like having a little self-confidence to carry you a long way. ■







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# Golf Punk

Photography by Bryan Sheffield



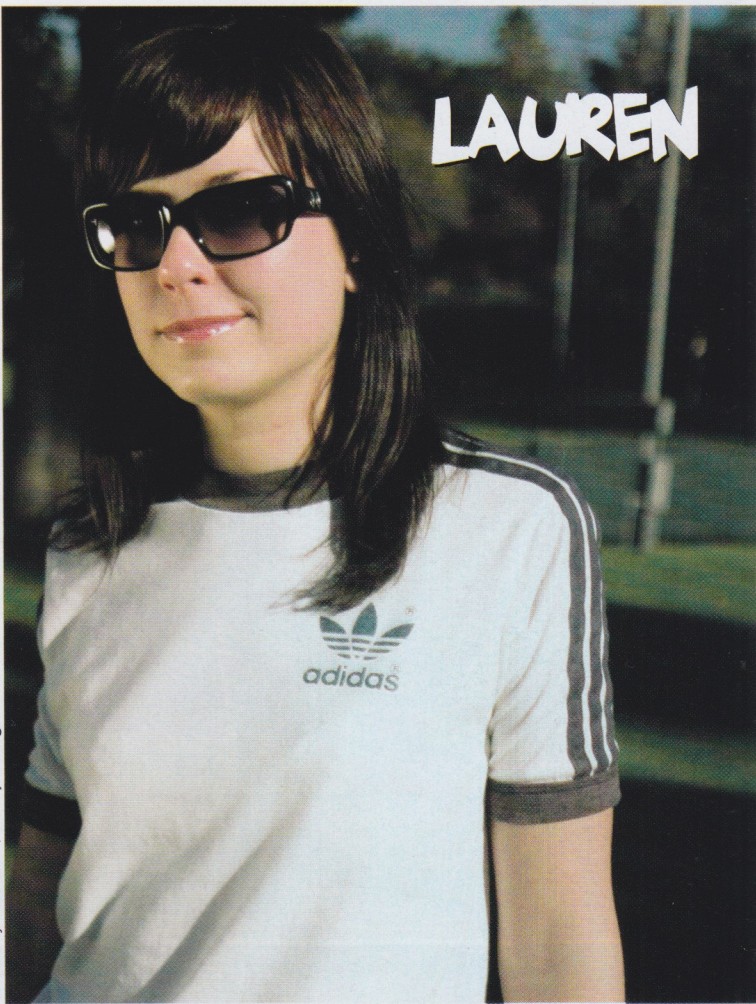
**Sharack** wears shoes, socks, and shirt by **Adidas**, shorts and hat by **55DSL**. **Caitlyn** wears shoes by **ProKeds**, skirt by **American Apparel**, shirt by **Golf Punk**. **Lauren** wears shoes by **Converse**, skirt by **55DSL**, shirt by **Golf Punk**. **Jeremy** wears shoes by **Globe**, shorts and shirt by **X-Large**, hat by **Ben Sherman**





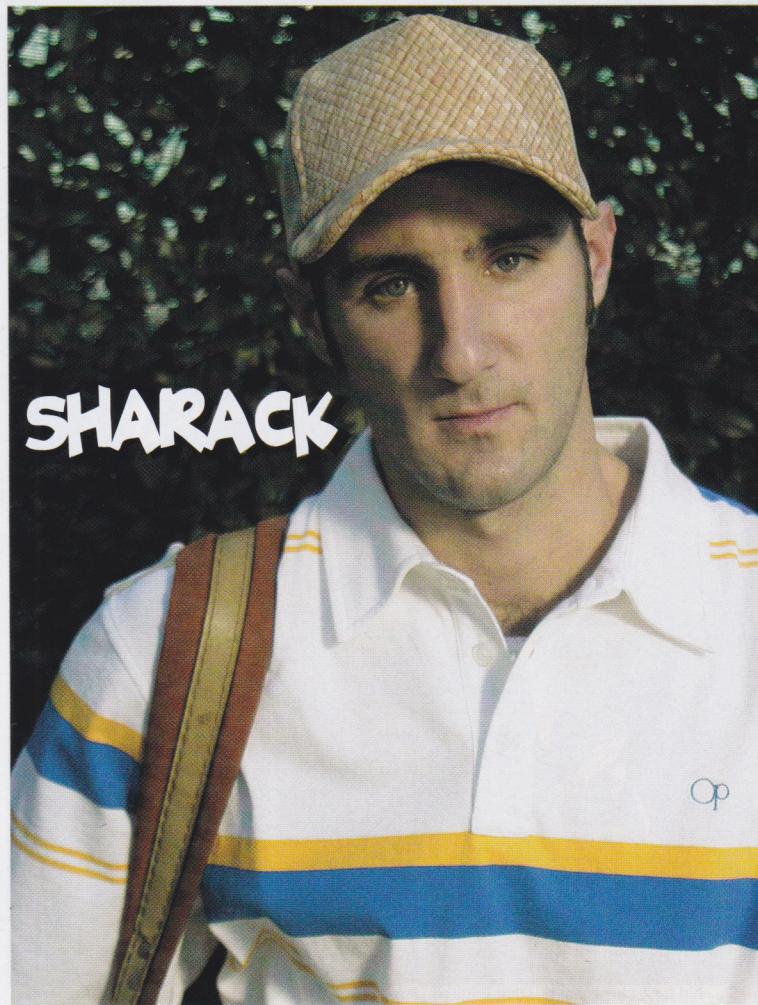
JEREMY

Glasses by Quiksilver, shirt by X-Large



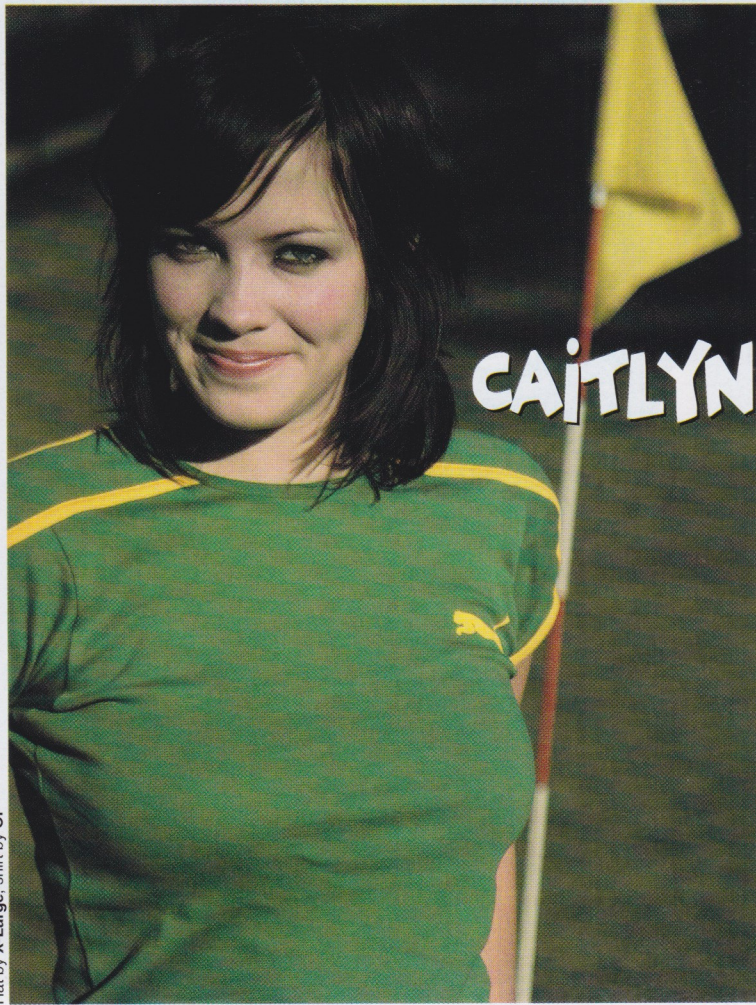
LAUREN

Glasses by bebe, shirt by Adidas



SHARACK

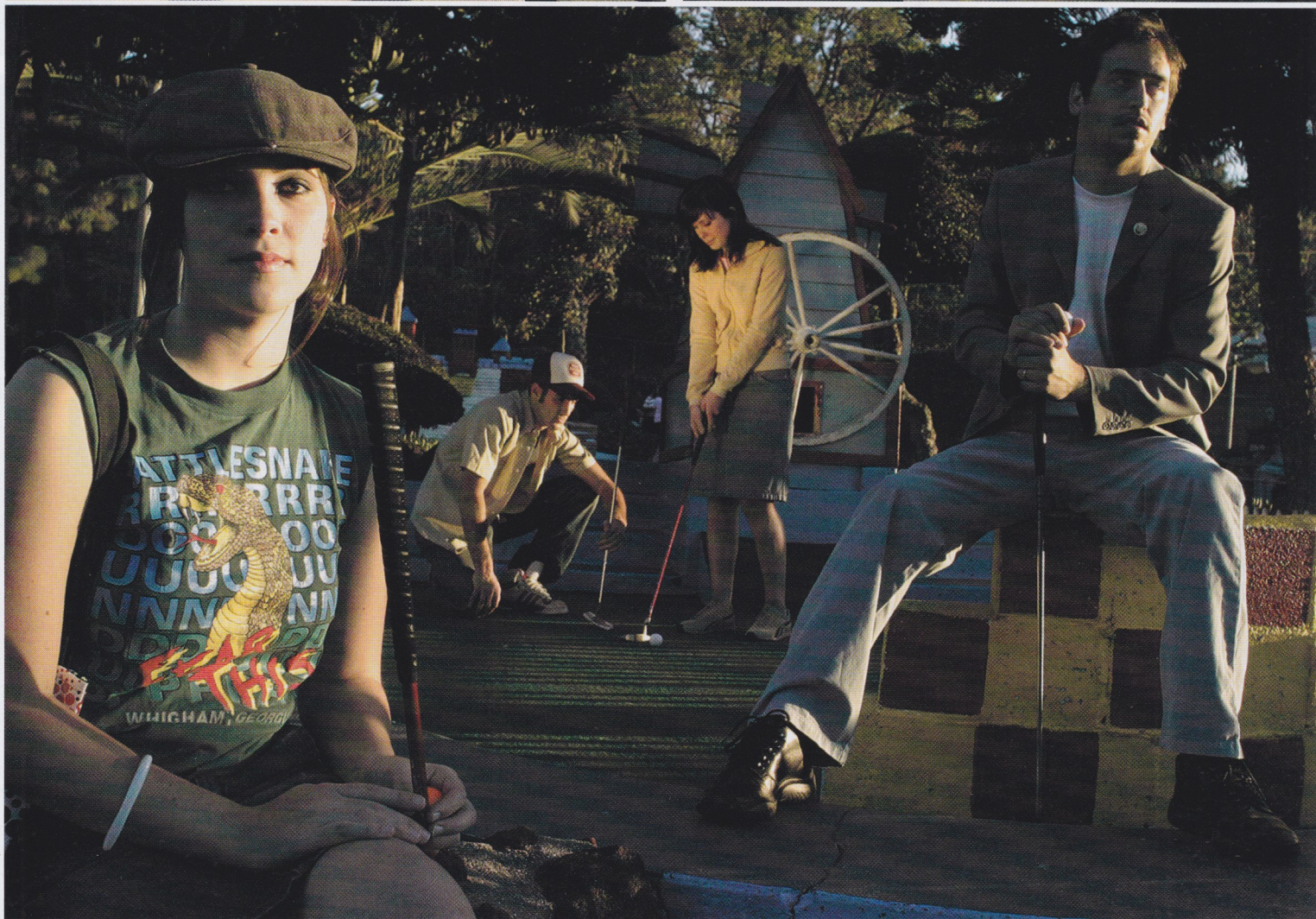
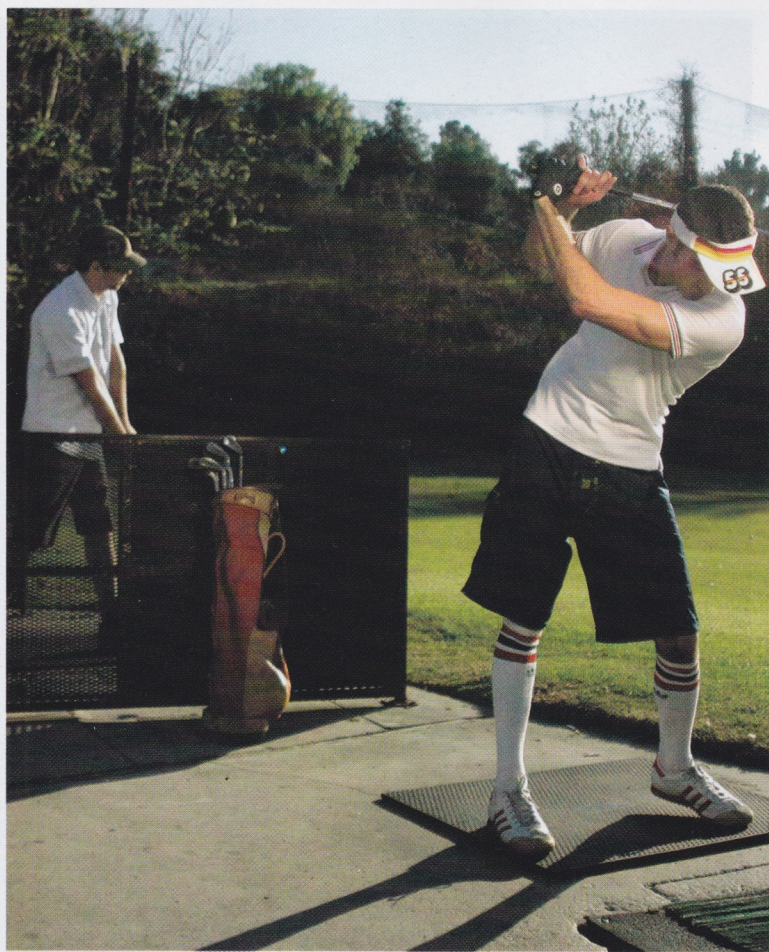
Hat by X-Large, shirt by OP



CAITLYN

Shirt by Puma





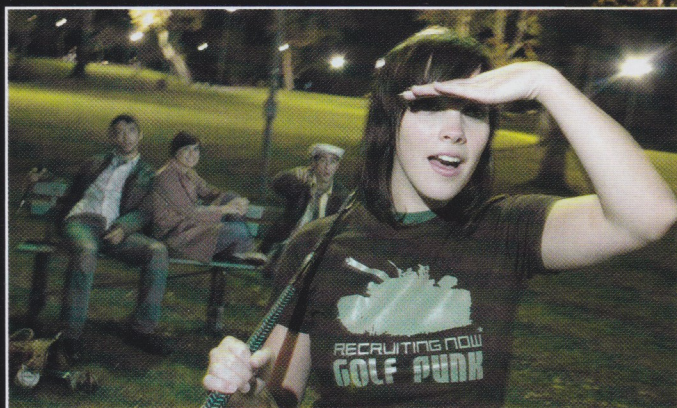
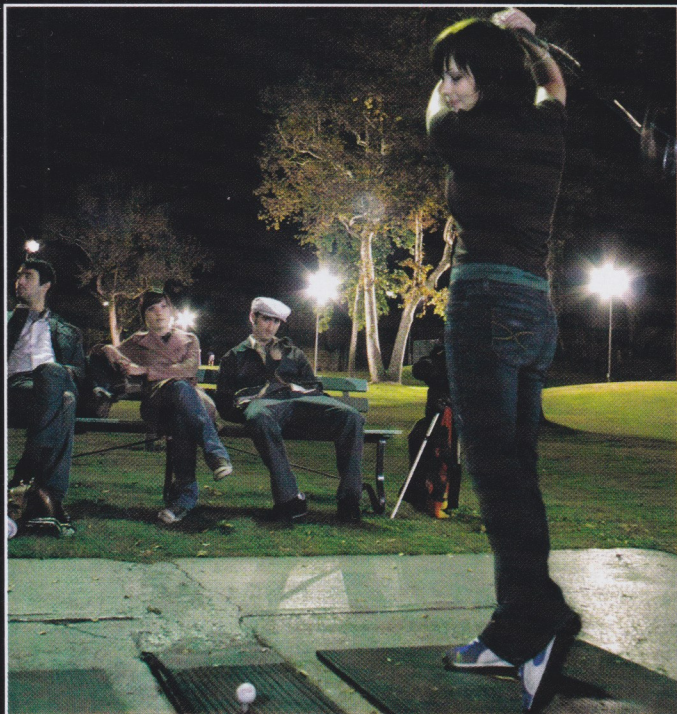
Caitlyn wears skirt by Lux, vintage T-Shirt, hat by Freshjive. Sharack wears shoes by Adidas pants by 55DSL, shirt by X-Large, hat by Olde English. Jeremy wears shoes by Prada, pants by 55DSL, jacket by Sisley. Lauren wears shoes by Reebok, skirt by Paul Frank, jacket by American Apparel





Sharack wears pants by **Ecko Unlimited**, shirt by **X-Large**, hat by **Freshjive**



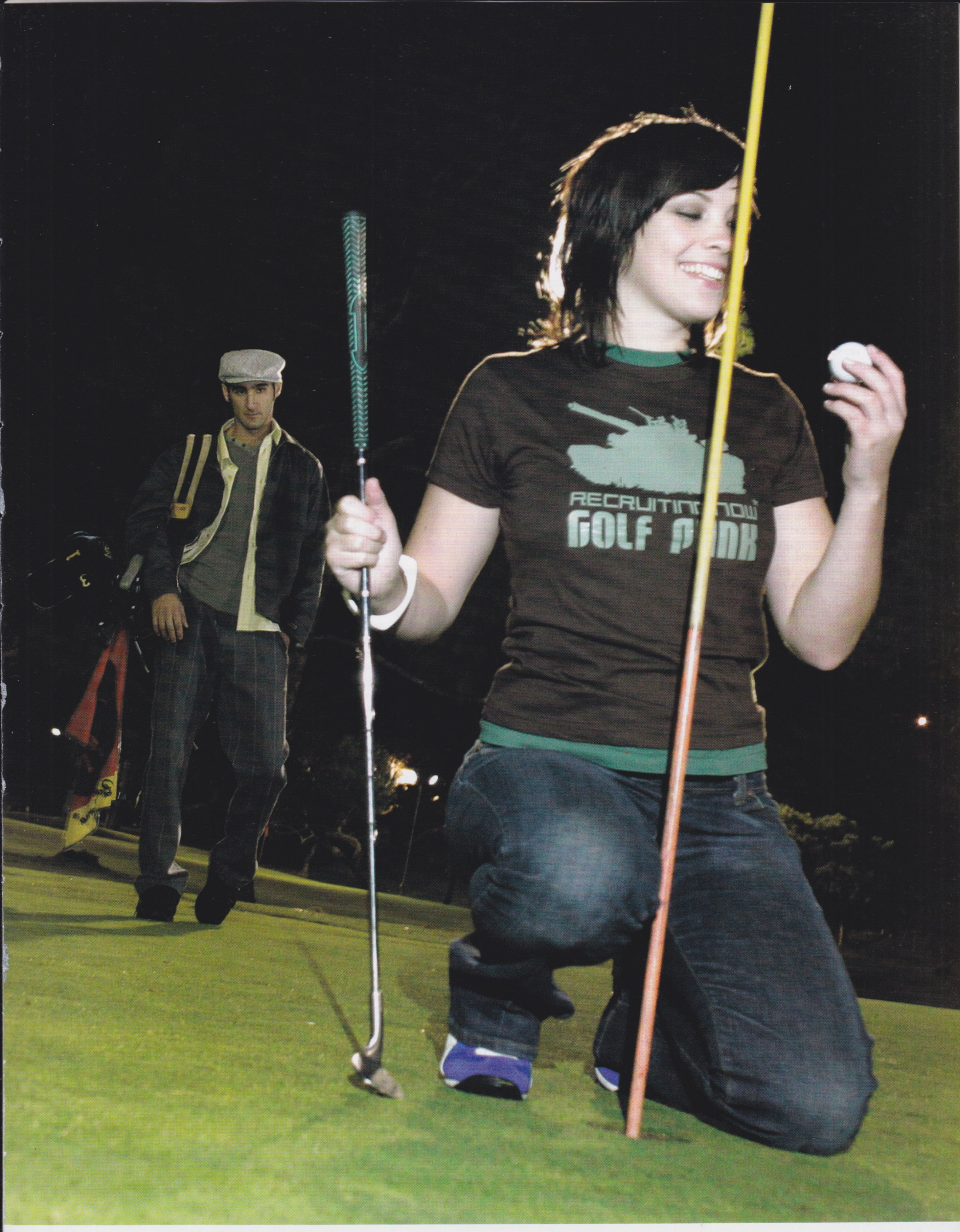


Jeremy wears pants by Old Navy (Girls, size 12), shirt by Freshjive, jacket by Armani Exchange. Lauren wears pants by Lux and vintage jacket. Sharack wears pants, undershirt, shirt, and hat by Freshjive, jacket by X-Large. Caitlyn wears pants by Lux, shirt by Golf Punk



"Hey everybody, we're all gonna get laid!"  
—Rodney Dangerfield







# ON THE ROAD WITH... AZURE RAY

In rock and roll lore, a third album is the definitive put-up or shut-up moment in a band's artistic journey. The first album is allowed to be hit-or-miss, providing a foundation of formative elements from which will grow most of that band's future work. The second album is usually fairly similar to the first, but focuses on refining a band's idiosyncrasies and solidifying their creative identity. The third album is when things get a bit tricky. The band, now with its artistic persona relatively stable, is presented with the proverbial double-edged sword of artistic freedom. Simply retracing their artistic steps will no longer suffice. The band now has to surprise us or be condemned to reside in the realm of exhausted ideas. *Hold On Love*, the third release from indie-pop superduo Azure Ray, is a study of this dilemma in miniature.

"We just left San Francisco, and we're on our way to Portland," says a Orenda Fink from a cell phone as her collaborator Maria Taylor pilots their van to the next stop on their two-month tour. "Maria likes it more than I do," she says regarding the touring that has led them across both coasts and is currently winding them toward their new home of Omaha, Nebraska. "I'm kind of tired of it," she admits. "I miss my home, my dog, my boyfriend. We're almost home," she brightens. "But we have a lot more touring to do for this record."

Such is the life for a band with a stock rising as quickly as Azure Ray's. They successfully made the transition from the perennial indie rock hotbed of Athens, Georgia, to the current buzz-town of Omaha. As one of the brightest satellites in the Saddle-Creek galaxy, touring as members of it-boy Conor Oberst's Bright Eyes and collaborating with Andy LeMaster in electro-pop ensemble Now It's Overhead, the duo has been carving out an achingly sincere niche in the Southern goth-pop canon. Still, somewhat drained from touring, Orenda Fink and Maria Taylor are not the type of people who bemoan the fact that they now find themselves on a bigger stage than ever before. In fact, on this day, Taylor and Fink are positively giddy, giggling as they pass the phone back and forth.

"It's a little nerve-wracking," says Taylor, as she navigates a northbound highway. "When we go to a show, and we're used to hoping that 100 people show up, and they're like, 'The show is sold out tonight,' I immediately get butterflies in my stomach. I don't perform well when I'm nervous; sometimes my voice won't even come out. So I have to start drinking early," she says before breaking into rapturous laughter. "I swear, I have to drink a bottle of wine before I can get up there and feel comfortable."

Increased alcohol consumption aside, no one can dispute the fact that Azure Ray has paid their dues. They're casualties of major label neglect, having taken a few spins on the industry hype machine as leaders of the late-'90's alternative rock band Little Red Rocket, then left to twist in the wind

until the purse strings were finally cut for good. They went home to rediscover themselves as artists, and needed little time to resurface as an earnestly shy duo whose *modus operandi* of vulnerable dream pop seemed to come closer to their essence as musicians than the volume and bluster of their previous band. While they might not be comfortable with all the attention, they don't give the impression they don't deserve it.

"We've been doing this for 11 years," continues Taylor. "I feel like everything that we do, we work so hard. It's not because some label invests a lot of money but doesn't give a shit about you. You're more proud of it, and it's more meaningful, not to mention that you have more creative control. Being on a major label changed our view of the music industry and where we wanted to go and the kind of people we wanted to work with. And I think that's probably why Azure Ray's music is so honest, because there isn't that much honesty in the major label world."

As with their previous two releases (2001's *Azure Ray* and 2002's *Burn And Shiver*), that honesty holds a pronounced presence on *Hold On Love*. What's new is the rich, expansive sound in which that vulnerability is now couched, taking a pronounced step away from the humble dream pop of their previous recordings and toward the lushness of chamber pop and subtle orchestration. With the help of Eric Bachmann, former Archers Of Loaf/current Crooked Fingers mastermind, another sonic dimension is added to their previously minimalist sound. Perfectly crafted loops and string arrangements. Sinuous harmonies wind around each other and the arrangements breathe with a new immediacy.

"I think it was a natural direction to go in, because we went from Warm Records to Saddle Creek, and Saddle Creek gave us a little more of a budget," says Fink. "We knew we would have opportunities to get different sounds and style elements that we wanted. We knew going into it we didn't have as many limitations and that we could pretty much do whatever we wanted with each song."

"On our last album, *Burn And Shiver*, we purposely decided to not have much structure," continues Taylor. "It was like a little experiment. We were just ready to do something in the opposite extreme, make a more structured album, with more structured songs, more hooks, and more instrumentation. We just try to keep things new and fresh, and we try to make ourselves inspired all the time. Changing things up does that for us." Just as they are moving Azure Ray into different sonic territory, Fink and Taylor are pushing into previously unexplored thematic realms, with an unexpected perspective: they've tapped a wellspring of optimism.

"I think when we wrote the first couple records, we were going through a really down time,

and now we're not so much anymore, and it reflects in the songwriting," admits Fink. "Hopefully that will be an upward trend." Where the previous albums leaned heavily toward dour meters and introspective rhythms, here, the band explores a few upbeat, even vaguely rocking arrangements. Despite the album's aura of experimentation, the core essence of the band remains fully intact. "A couple of the songs were more of a departure than others," explains Taylor. "But to me, the songs are all sonically and structurally bigger. If you stripped them down and heard them, I think they would sound very similar to our other albums." As their audience grows, the intimacy that characterizes both their songwriting and their performances is potentially jeopardized.

"What we do is so intimate and we want to connect with the crowd, and it's harder to do when there's more people. I don't ever want to lose that intimacy, to get to the point where you're trying to figure out how to do that when there are 500 people as opposed to 30." Yet, where the expansion of their audience seems to rub against their inward-looking aesthetic, the fanaticism of their fan base comes as confirmation that more people than ever are resonating with their introspective muses.

"It's surprising that people know so much about you," says Taylor. "You don't know anything about them— you haven't even seen them before—and they know a whole lot about you. Which is fine... it's just kind of strange. We played Pomona the other day, and this guy had a tattoo of my face on his arm. I was like, 'Oh my God! Why did you do that? Why is that there?'" Still, if such attention is overwhelming, Fink and Taylor give little impression they're letting it add undue gloss to their already glamorous image. In fact, if anything, the duo impresses for just how disarmingly grounded they are.

"I don't know," Taylor replies regarding what frontiers remain for the band. "If we can just keep doing what we're doing, maybe we could work with people that we've always wanted to work with musically. As long as we can keep connecting with people and growing as artists, that's all I could ask for. And, it wouldn't hurt if we could make a little bit more money so we could have our babies sooner or later. Our maternal needs are starting to kick in, and we're ready to have... babies." That being said, for a band that seems to chart progress through the measurements of a distinctively internal logic, just what constitutes success for Azure Ray at this stage?

"As long as we are happy and have enough money just to live, I think that's success. I feel successful right now because we can kind of slide by and don't have to get jobs. We're doing what we love to do. I'm getting to make music, perform it, hang out with my best friend in every moment of every day, and meet wonderful people all over the world. I don't know how much more successful I'd care to get." ■



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# HIGH ON FIRE

## GET MEDIEVAL ON YOUR ASSES!

New York City's Bowery is a desolate place. Within the city's urban sprawl lies a barren strip of industrial restaurant suppliers, men's shelters, dilapidated tenement housing, and dive bars. Even in the post-Giuliani era the Bowery remains a modern day version of the wastelands inhabited by Mad Max in the movies that bear his name. Nestled just off the Bowery is the Mars Bar, a seedy dive that serves as a haven for drunks, punks, winos, and various other miscreants of society. With Motörhead and Discharge on the jukebox, this is a fitting place to take High On Fire for a round of beers and interview.

On the walk over, the band treats me to a few stories of some of the debacles they've witnessed in the Mars Bar. Personally, I think the rule there is anything goes so long as the cops don't show up. For these rock and roll warriors it's just another bunch of faceless drunks.

Since forming in 1999, the band has traversed the United States and Europe numerous times, bringing their brand of sludgy metal to throngs of eager fans. The band quickly climbed the ranks of the already burgeoning U.S. underground metal scene. They can hold their own whether opening for Mastodon, Mushroomhead, or Andrew W.K.

High On Fire's roots lie in that of another group, the highly revered doom metal band Sleep. Considered by many to be part of an unholy grail of metal, Sleep and their guitarist Matt Pike laid down the blueprint that would be followed by many likeminded stoners well after the band's demise. Sleep's sound was a dark and plodding repetitive barrage of orchestrated aggression that moved at a snail's pace. Their swan song, the epic 52-minute *Jerusalem*, is a veritable stoner classic which has recently since seen re-release courtesy of Tee Pee Records. After Sleep's demise, Pike put out a call to arms, enlisting fellow Bay Area residents George Rice and Des Kensel on bass and drums respectively.

Almost immediately after their formation, the band set out to redefine the meaning of the term "power-trio." Their sound, diametrically opposed to that of Sleep, is a gritty combination of stoner rock sensibility and Motörhead infused driving riffage.

*The Art Of Self Defense*, High On Fire's maiden voyage, released by Man's Ruin, solidified them as a metal force to be reckoned with, and their growing reputation was reinforced by their tours across the globe. The album is rife with what Tipper Gore and the PMRC would deem "offensive material." Guitars are thick and chunky, and the indecipherable lyrics, half sung and half slurred, sound like catcalls from Satan himself. A few tracks off of the band's debut even showed up in *Gumma*, Harmony Korine's mockumentary about growing up poor white trash. I can't think of a better soundtrack for random incest and killing kittens.

The lyrics aren't even offensive *per se*, but they do paint a gruesome portrayal of medieval battles and slain dragons. They have songs entitled "The Yeti," "Hung, Drawn, And Quartered" and let's not even get into their cover of Celtic Frost's "The Usurper."

While they're not the typical fare, the songs hold parallels to reality, especially the realities of playing in a full time touring band. Pike says, "[There is] definitely meaning behind what we're talking about in our music. We concoct stories together and then sit at the bar and put them into words."

So they don't have a following of Dungeons &

Dragons fans that have taken their cries for battle to the limit? "Some people do. Some people like to think they know what they're talking about. I just like to keep it personal. What they get out of it, hopefully that helps them and makes them feel," concludes Pike.

After Man's Ruin folded, the band found a new home with Pennsylvania's premiere metal label, Relapse Records. In 2001, High On Fire unleashed *Surrounded By Thieves*, and jumped in the van for more touring. With a new album out, the band has gained significant attention and perhaps infamy, depending on who you ask, from circles beyond the tightly knit crew of bands and fans that initially nourished them.

In the past year alone, High On Fire has toured with the likes of Mushroomhead and Andrew W.K. the former being the torchbearers of theatric costume metal, the latter is the quintessential beer drinking music.

The band had some strong feelings towards touring with the new (and nü) guard of metal, Mushroomhead. "It didn't work out crowd-wise, but we totally love all those guys," says Pike. "They're just such good people, but their crowd hated our guts. [We had] a lot of ice and cups thrown at us and shit." Kensel adds that while touring with Andrew W.K., "[For] about half the set they were just staring at us wondering what's goin' on up there."

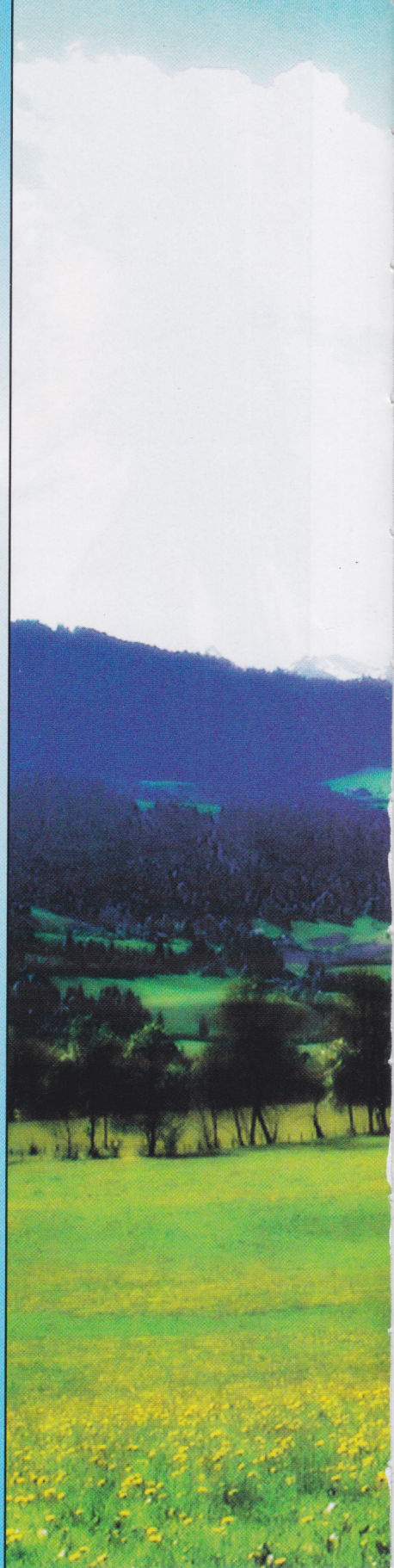
Did any of Mushroomhead's highly conceptual ideals rub off on them? Could a concept album be far off? "We haven't really discussed it. Our last one *was* kind of a concept record. I don't know yet. Des would like to try and avoid it, but I think the Queensryche is coming out in me," says Pike. "Isn't Kiss' *The Elder* a concept record too?" interjects Rice. "I don't think it is," says Pike. "I don't know what they were thinking."

But it hasn't been all mismatched tours and unruly audiences. In the past few years, the U.S. metal scene has experienced a major resurgence. With groups like Mastodon and Shadows Fall giving contrived nü-metal a run for its money, there have been ample opportunities for High On Fire to get out there and rock the faces off of diehards who still value the indelible mark left by luminaries such as Lemmy and Ronnie James Dio.

"I like that stuff, especially Mastodon," says Rice. "We're good friends with Shadows Fall, [and] we know a couple of the guys in Lamb Of God. It all just gets to be this loose weird family that you just meet up with on tour. It's really cool to see all your family members out there." Some might say the bands have gotten a bit too close. "Mastodon sucks a *mean* dick," says Rice. "The band that sucks the best dick: Mastodon," agrees Kensel. Apparently this has been a running joke between the two that has gone on for some time now.

On that note I figure it's time to end this interview. As the jukebox begins to blare at an ungodly volume, I get the feeling it's time to go. These guys have to roll to a show later where they'll play as part of the CMJ Music Marathon for a packed house of old school metal heads, hipsters, hardcore kids, and those just generally curious about what they're about. And they'll tear it down, playing a ferocious set as headliners on the Tee Pee Records showcase.

On the way out the door, Rice shares another rock and roll war story with me. This one, about the time the band was pulled over and their van searched at the Texas border. "This take-no-shit sheriff is searching the van and he says 'If I find even one seed you're all going to jail!' The whole time I'm thinking, 'We're from California, man, our pot don't have seeds.'" ■





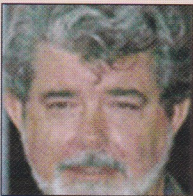






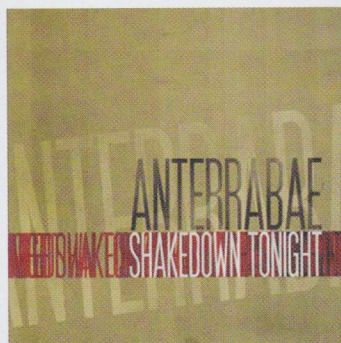
# DIRECTOR'S CUT

If all the money ever earned by the *Star Wars*, *Lord Of The Rings*, and *Matrix* franchises were compiled into one gross domestic product, it would make up the 4<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world, right ahead of the state of California. Actually, I just made that statistic up, but it sounds like it could be real, doesn't it? Regardless, these are some of the most epic movies ever made, and it takes a special person to direct one, and by special, we mean weird.

We've put together some of the more bizarre personality quirks and movie moments of the directors who brought you these trilogies, by some measures the most compelling movie trilogies of the past decade, so you could be the judge. We have to say, our money is on Lucas. The Lucas public relations people were so deathly afraid to release a publicity photo of their head honcho, perhaps because he is in fact morphing into a *Star Wars* character himself. That, or he's become a human CGI effect. [JF]

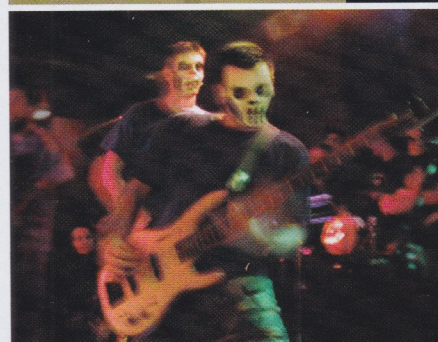
	GEORGE LUCAS	PETER JACKSON	WACHOWSKI BROS.
Made movie featuring puppets	<i>Howard The Duck</i> , <i>Return Of The Jedi</i> , <i>Labyrinth</i>	<i>Meet The Feebles</i>	Evil porcupine robot in <i>Matrix Revolutions</i> , <i>Deus Ex Machina</i> .
Marital status	Two kids. Ex-wife edited <i>American Graffiti</i> .	Longtime co-writer, Frances Walsh. They have two kids but are not married.	Little is known about Andy Wachowski's personal life (the brothers have refused to do any interviews since 1999) but Larry is currently in a relationship with a dominatrix. The two met in her dungeon. Larry is currently being sued by her ex-husband claiming he stole the dominatrix from her ex. Rumor has it that he is also undergoing a sex-change.
Film manifestations of relationship woes	Would-be romance between siblings, Luke and Leah, in <i>Star Wars</i> . Furthermore, the <i>Star Wars Holiday Special</i> depicts a scene of Wookiee masturbation (and Bea Arthur). See <i>Law of Inertia</i> #12 for more info.	<i>Meet The Feebles</i> is a sex, drug, and violence-filled movie sometimes called "Muppets on acid." How weird must it have been on the day they filmed the puppet love scene?	Next generation of cybersex? Maybe. Let's ask the "woman in red" from the first movie in the trilogy.
Famous deviant female character	Princess Leah as Jabba's bkiki-clad slave in <i>Return Of The Jedi</i> . Human/duck sex-scene in <i>Howard The Duck</i> . Jesus, George!	Eowyn in <i>Return Of The King</i> thinks she's a knight. Kinky!	Trinity spends half the trilogy in a vinyl bondage suit. Plus, Zee's artillery partner makes Ellen Degeneres look about as feminine as Cindy Crawford.
Favorite on-screen homosexual moment	<i>Phantom Menace</i> : As if it weren't enough that a grown man calls another grown man master as they run around in pajamas (Obie-Wan and Qui-Gon), we have C-3PO and R2-D2 bickering like an abusive gay couple. While we're on the subject, C-3PO has got to be the gayest robot in film history.	<i>Return Of The King</i> : In the book, <i>Return Of The King</i> , Sam Rests his head in Frodo's lap and tells Frodo he loves him. This racy scene never made the movie, (bonus DVD scene perhaps?) but still, brotherhood runs uncomfortably strong amongst the Fellowship.	<i>Matrix Reloaded</i> : That giant underground rave/orgy scene. Mud, techno, and a muscular Laurence Fishburne with more holes in his body than is kosher.
Best lesbian moment	<i>Phantom Menace</i> : Queen Amidala and her creepy handmaidens who are prepared to die protecting her.	<i>Heavenly Creatures</i> : Two nubile young girls (including Kate Winslet, later to act in <i>Quills</i> ) exploring their budding friendship, and much more....	<i>Bound</i> : This movie, starring Gina Gershon, (fresh off the set of <i>Showgirls</i> ), is about lesbians that steal from the mob.
Phallic sybol of power	In <i>Attack Of The Clones</i> , Count Dukoo's slightly bent, 4-foot flaming rod.	<i>The Two Towers</i> , dummy.	Neo's ability to jack in and fly.
Bad facial hair			





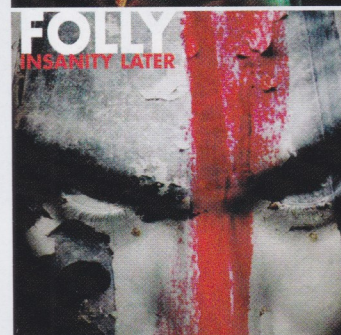
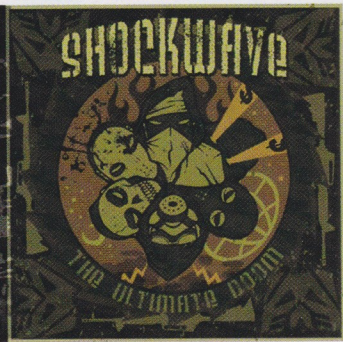
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## Shakedown Tonight



# Shockwave

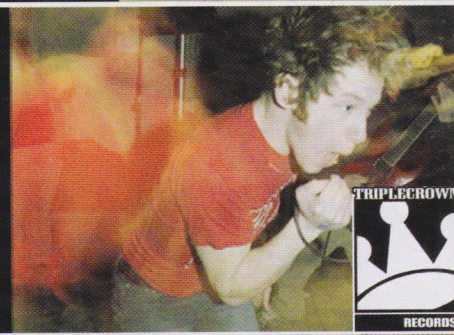
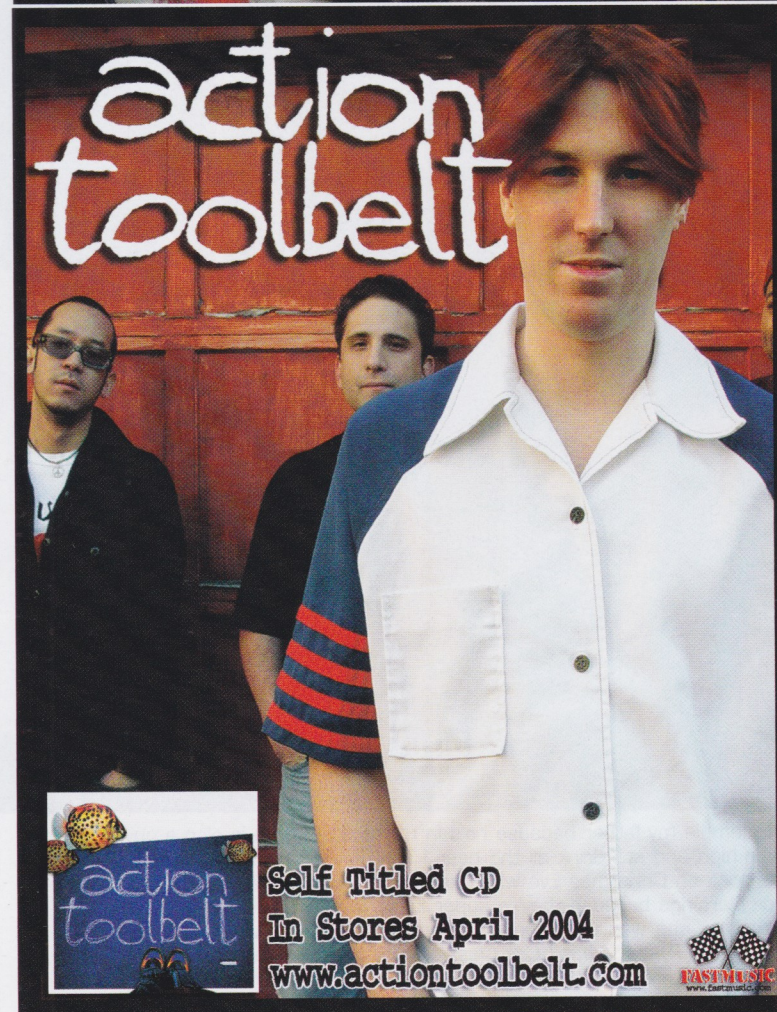
## The Ultimate Doom



# Folly

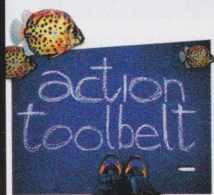

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# EVERY TIME IDIE TRAILER DAYS

**PHOTOS:** LESLIE VAN STELTEN

**CONCEPT:** FATE

**STYLIST:** K MART

**CATERING:** BUDWEISER

**SPECIAL THANKS:** ADRENELINE PR

**LOCATION:** BAY SHORE MOBILE PARK

BAY SHORE, NY

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Ratboy (drums), Steve Micciche (bass), Andy Wil-  
laims (guitar), Keith Buckley (vocals),  
Jordan Buckley (guitar)

**KEITH BUCKLEY** >> **Which family member do you most resemble:** I most resemble my father because he's in my family and he is also a guy. Actually, he *started* my family. **Future goals:** As of right now, it's to bowl a career high and still drink all the beer I can. **Favorite brand of beer:** Schlitz will always have a special place in my heart because it's what Santa used to drink on Christmas Eve when he came to my house and threatened to whip me and my cousins and my brother with a belt. **Pierces or tats:** I favor piercings because they're super lame, like a dangly earring or a spike through your lip. **First car make and model:** She was a beauty. Nice Italian make, she was used though, about 14 years old when I got her. Cost me about \$30. Wait, that was my first hooker. **Favorite classic rock record:** *Now That's What I Call Classic Rock Vol. 1*, it has a remix of "Don't Fear The Reaper" done by the Baha Men. **Who are your heroes:** Jared from Subway. **Why you play rock:** Because it's a goddam cash cow! **Choose**





one: Slipknot, Metallica, Agnostic Front, Pantera, Dashboard Confessional. Metallica. If we were supposed to choose one band to be publicly executed. **ANDREW WILLIAMS** >> **Which family member do you most resemble:** My dad. We both have unibrows and he's like a little miniature me! **Future goals:** To conquer the earth, I want everyone to fall to their knees when I enter a room! **Favorite brand of beer:** I don't drink, it's for pussies! **Pierces or tats:** Tats! I don't need no stinking fishing lures in my fucking face! That shit sucks. **First car make and model:** I had a Toyota Corolla. It was tan and sometimes it just wouldn't start and I would have to punch my starter to get it to work. It sucked! **Favorite classic rock record:** Good question! My all time favorite is The Who's *Who's Next*. They were the first punk rock band and they set precedents other bands would never touch. On that record it was so raw and so powerful. They did it. That's it, they did it! **Who are your heroes:** My mom and dad. They have gone through so much





## EVERY TIME I DIE

and to see how successful they have been and how proud they are of it is so amazing! **Why you play rock:** What do you expect me to play, fucking polka? Rock gets you chicks. Don't you know that? **Choose one:** Slipknot, Metallica, Agnostic Front, Pantera, Dashboard Confessional: You're asking ETID this question? Pantera you fucks, and why? Duh! **MICHAEL "RATBOY" NOVACK JR.** >> **Which family member of yours do you most resemble?** My Dad, he's short like me, and has a great respect for music. **Future goals:** The whole wife and kids thing, MTV cribs, and to be a part of the music industry for as long as possible. I feel that this is where I belong in life. **Favorite brand of beer:** I don't drink beer. **Pierces or tats:** Sick tats. Lots of tribal. Why? Because it's awesome and never goes out of style, right? **Symbolic position in the band:** If we're talking symbols I wanna be a yin-yang. **Favorite classic**





rock record: AC/DC's *Back In Black*. **JORDAN BUCKLEY** >> Which family member of yours do you most resemble? My uncle Donald. He's 100% blind but still goes hunting. Every time he kills something *The Buffalo News* does a story about him. Actually that part is nothing like me, but we both like classic rock. **Future goals?** Work out, then play some Nintendo with my brother. **Favorite brand of beer?** The kind that's a dollar on Mondays at Broadway Lanes, I ain't picky. **First car, make and model:** '97 Ford TASZ. **Favorite classic rock record?** *Led Zeppelin IV*. **Who are your heroes?** Jim Kelly and Marv Levy. **Why do you play rock?** It's easier to get the high score on Erotic Megatouch all across the country when you have someone paying you to be in their bar. Being in a rock band makes this happen. **Choose one: Slipknot, Metallica, Agnostic Front, Pantera, Dashboard Confessional:** Pantera. I've never heard Agnostic Front, Dashboard just plain isn't cool, Metallica's only good release is *St. Anger*, oh, and Pantera is the greatest





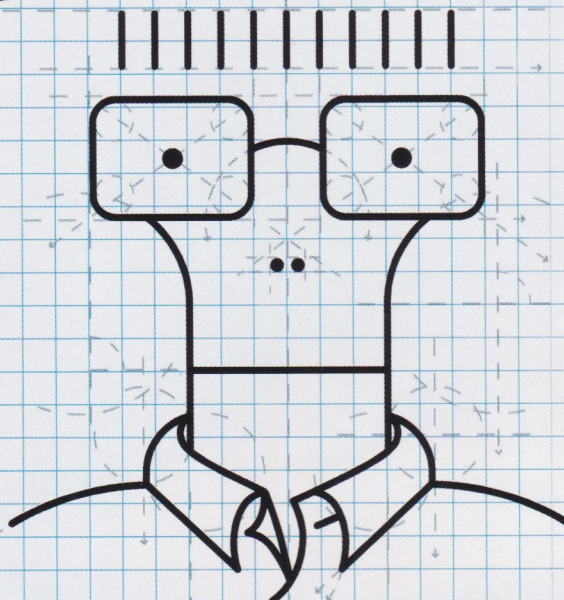
## EVERY TIME I DIE

band in the world. **STEPHEN MICCICHE (aka, Mitch)** >> **Which family member do you most resemble:** Everyone gave my Mom weird looks when she said I was her son, so I guess I got my looks mostly from my Italian pops. Although you can throw a bunch of nationalities in that and pick one out, that's about how confusing I look. **Future Goals:** [To go to] Japan, to bowl a 300, start a business with my roommate Grodek, and watch the Bills and Sabres become world champions. **Favorite brand of beer:** The free kind. **First car make and model:** The almighty Methuselah.... 1983 Pontiac Bonneville Station Wagon, bought it for \$50, lasted me 9 months. **Favorite classic rock record:** The Budgets' *Class Of 2000*. ■



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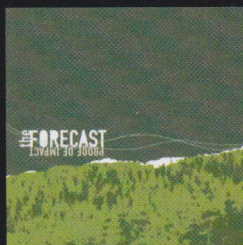
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# ELLIOTT SMITH

## EVERYBODY CARES, EVERYBODY UNDERSTANDS

**"The potential you'll be, that you'll never see..." – Miss Misery**

I never wanted to write this article. But, when I say *this article*, I don't mean just one about Elliott Smith. I mean the one where you talk about everything this singer/songwriter could have been, and how tragic it all is—how the world doesn't make any sense after someone like this dies. But, this article isn't that. It's about depression and this guy, who was brilliant at understanding sadness, and was characterized all of his life as being sad, wasn't sad. People who have manic depression aren't just feeling down, they're sick. And Elliott would never recover.

"It's not his fault at all. It's something that's not preventable," says licensed psychologist Dr. Patricia A. Farrell. "Many times it's genetic, and, in many instances, it's poorly controlled even with medication. Even if they went for treatment, the drugs they use have side effects that are very undesirable or cause the people to become extremely flat. They feel it's better to go through the mood swings than have that absolute lack of any emotion or feeling. It's not a weakness or a willfulness. It's a real medical illness. And it's difficult to do much."

Steven Paul "Elliott" Smith, born in Omaha, Nebraska, was found dead at 12:15 p.m. on Tuesday, October 21 at his home in the Silverlake section of Los Angeles from an apparent suicide. His live-in girlfriend discovered his body, a knife struck through his heart. Something that Dr. Farrell would cite as, "bound and determined," like Kurt Cobain's shotgun suicide. He was 34. All I wanted to do was ask him some questions about his new album. I wish that I could have told him one day—in something as thinly veiled as a record review—that he helped me. I bet a lot of people wanted the same opportunity.

Basically, I would have told him the unoriginal tale of a freshman at college in Boston (actually the blue collar suburb of Waltham) longing since high school for a girlfriend who shared his musical tastes. Friday nights I would ride the commuter rail seven miles into Boston, through a rainy October semester, making my way to Harvard Square. There I would feel the maximum amount of alienation watching other couples having real intimate moments, while I hadn't had so much as a deep tongue kiss. I would put on his music and walk down silent cobblestone streets. I would press my head against the bus window and sigh wistfully as "Pitselah" would reassure me that, "no one deserves it." If music is the soundtrack to our lives and intimate memories, than that first year of college would be scored to the albums, *Roman Candle*, *XO*, and the handful of songs off the *Good Will Hunting* soundtrack.

Elliott was a compatriot in the complacently sad set of guys out there. You might have seen us. We're the ones walking around, heads low, hoping that girls (any girls, really) dig a guy who's too insecure to ever pursue a girl. I'd like to think that our brand of justice is ultimately ending up with that girl that scorned us for being such rejects. But, that's not really the case. More often you end up with someone that's your equivalent, and hopefully loves you an equal share.

However, Elliott wasn't one of the lonely boys. Oh, I'm sure that he understood us very well, and he shows us that sadness is a far more complex emotion than happiness (it's universally recognized that there are more Poes in the world than Wordsworths), but there's being sad, and then there's a sadness that nobody can escape. You see, manic depression is a disease, not heartache, and it was killing Elliott long before he took his life.

"This kind of illness generally runs in families. It's a chemical imbalance. People have said to me in the hospital, 'if I ever had another manic episode, I would kill myself.' Many people find it absolutely tormenting, and they get no peace in that phase, so they either consider, or complete suicide," assured Dr. Farrell.

Before this becomes a pedantic after school special of a memorial, Elliott Smith didn't die to be remembered as Mr. Misery in a trite obituary written by a flippant errand boy at E! News. Elliott was stigmatized in the media. In fact, when I went to his closest colleagues and friends, humble and genuflect to explain what I was doing, they gave me words of encouragement, but little else. They're protective of their friend. ultimately, the world is going to think what they want about a person. Nonetheless he didn't feel that his lyrics were an open letter from his soul.

"He didn't agree with their interpretation, and I would agree with him. Sometimes people, in their eagerness to be analytic or find meaning or explanation, will come up with things like that. Sometimes, when the artist is asked they say, 'no, I never had that idea.' Maybe that says more about the person who was analyzing the work than the artist themselves," says Dr. Farrell.

There is one element that comes up all too often in Elliott's songs; one that his friends would understandably hide from public exposure. In literature, to call the poet and the voice in his poem the same person is naive. Almost every song on his first self-titled album for Kill Rock Stars had a lyric or two about "death in your arm." Elliott doesn't hide the fact there was drinking and drugs, and it helped numb the pain. On "Needle In

The Hay," he sings, "I'm taking the cure / so I can be quiet whenever I want."

There are too many drugs and suicide stories in rock and roll. There's Jimi, Kurt, Jim, Janis, Nick Drake, and Brad Nowell to name six without trying. Most are drug addicts, most were diagnosed with manic depression... all are dead. Elliott was older than most at 34, but in the end it just meant that he had to deal with his demons longer. We've got to accept that he's gone, young and brilliant, just like the stupidest of clichés.

Maybe right now you're saying, "Fuck you Elliott. You're so selfish, because you were ours." Now there's nothing to look forward to—because you were everything to us. You were the last of the dead language poets. You might think that modern emotional troubadours like Chris Carrabba know the pain of isolation, but I grew up in that South Florida town where he grew up. Chris is a wonderful and sweet guy, but he doesn't have demons like Elliott Smith. The ones who do aren't around anymore to talk about them.

When Elliott was still Steven Smith, he had a trying childhood. Between his parent's divorce at a young age, his stepfather's abuse, and a life that was uprooted and moved from the plains of Texas to the rain-soaked streets of Portland, it appears there's been a fair share of life that had to be lived before he changed his name to Elliott. In a quote from the Jan./Feb. 2001 issue of *Magnet* magazine, his mother said, "As a child, he was always the underdog."

The underdog at age 10 composed his first award-winning piece of music, entitled, "Fantasy." Elliott has always said that one of his biggest influences were The Beatles. As influences go The Beatles are probably credited as much as God is at the Grammy's. Everybody has their favorite Beatle; John was the rebellious genius, Paul was the musical direction, George was the spiritual center, and Ringo brought the drums. Elliott used to play Lennon's "Jealous Guy" a lot during his live sets. You can see him as a John. The kind of person who is charismatic because they're so out of step with the rest of the world. You can see him more as a Paul on *Figure 8* (with a lot of the production taking place in the very same Abbey Road studios) with lush orchestrations pushing melodic boundaries, and a work ethic that strives for personal perfection. I think they're wrong. I think he's George—the quiet Beatle.

They say you only know who your real friends are after you're dead. Judging from tributes and transcripts of high and low profile people who were friends, acquaintances, or admiring strangers, he didn't lack friendship.



# ELLIOTT SMITH

EVERYBODY CARES, EVERYBODY UNDERSTANDS



Almost a year ago, there was a highly publicized incident where Smith was arrested at a Beck/Flaming Lips show. In an *L.A. Weekly* article Beck gives his account, "He had an acute sense of justice. At one of my shows last year he tried to intervene with security, who were harassing a kid, and was in turn beaten and handcuffed by them."

Ted Leo weighed in about the time that he was playing a show in Portland on a sweltering stage to a handful of kids. The promoter was in the back selling sodas for a quarter, and refused to give Leo a drink without being paid first. "Just then, a person stepped out from the 20 person crowd, put a quarter in the promoter's hand, and walked the soda up to me on stage. It's largely due to that small gesture that I'm still playing music today."

Margaret Cho, of all people, made her quiet admiration of him known on an internet post, "Maybe your unhappiness was what we loved about you, so that our love was a constant reminder of how much unhappiness you had... but you were maybe too beautiful for this world. So beautiful that it hurt to be in it. I hope that you are not hurting anymore."

Forgive Elliott for what he's done. Be still for a second. For everyone who was crying on that October afternoon, think about this: Elliott loved to sing karaoke. For those who hold Mr. Smith to be small voice of the lonely and sensitive, remember that he also liked to follow that bouncing ball, singing to muzak versions of top 40 hits. Maybe he liked to put on some old Pointer Sisters and rock out. Maybe he'd be Axl Rose one night. Yeah, that's how I'd choose to remember him.

And contrary to assumption, Elliott smiled. One personal recorded instance was last summer. Although most of the Field Day festival at Giant's Stadium was a logistical nightmare, what with the blanket of steady drizzle and a couple of hippies wondering where everyone else was in Long Island, people came. It was right after Blur tried to rouse a crowd of young Yanks to toss up two fingers to "Boys And Girls" and right before Beck was accidentally hit in the ribs by some foolish stagehand. Elliott came onstage, all grins, a few false starts, and some lyrical stumbles as people slowly made their way out to the second stage parking lot. Elliott sat on the smallish second stage like he was selling miracle mops. He played "Pretty (Ugly Before)." One concertgoer who posted on Sweetadelaine.com remembered, "It was a great show. The first acoustic one I've ever seen, and Elliott looked really good and seemed happy."

"There's a popular myth about people who are suicidal... that they show it in many ways. They say goodbye, they give things away, they seem depressed— that's not true," says Dr. Farrell. "There are a number of people who, when they decide to kill themselves, not saying in Elliott's particular case, but when they decide to kill themselves they're at peace. They've decided that there's going to be an end to their misery, this is going to be the end of all of this horrible suffering, and this is a good thing in their minds."

The first time I saw Elliott was back in Boston at the Paradise Rock Club. I took my freshman resident advisor... a girl named Brenna who was about two years older than I was, and on the receiving end of hardcore puppy love. When Elliott took the stage it was a bit disconcerting. He was backed by Quasi (former Heatmiser Sam Coomes and his wife on drums), but they seemed to almost be propping him up. Not that it looked like Smith was strung out—he just looked like a feather. He'd bend over his guitar amp and make himself small. He'd keep himself closed up tight, and when he sang it would come out of his contorted mouth like pain. That was magical. One of his fans described being at an Elliott Smith show as the closest you'll get to church. Real church. The one that's supposed to move you. Like the first time anybody ever bothered explaining the difference between beauty with a capital B (the Baudelaire kind) and a lowercase one (the sunny day kind).

This is an image that will always resonate with me. In a concert situation you think nothing of a kid jumping up on stage. Maybe a little more odd trying to stage dive to "No Name No. 5," but, this wasn't a stage diver. He jumped on that stage, not in a threatening way nor like a crazed crowd surfer. He just wanted to give Elliott a hug. And they hugged. And that hug meant, "Thanks for saving me... thank you for this beautiful music that empathizes with my hurt better than my parents, or my religious leader, my therapist, my dog, or possibly God himself." Elliott hugged him back. It wasn't a guy hug, with the back slapping. He hugged him like a crying child. In fact the kid was crying. I'll always wonder if somebody hugged Elliott like that when he really needed to be hugged.

In the middle of his *Either/Or* tour in 1997, he took a leap off a cliff. He didn't die. He was committed to an institution in Arizona for a week that he would describe as his idea of hell. In a 2000 *NME* interview he said, "Let's just say I didn't want to go there. If you took T.V. culture and then focused it through a magnifying glass on a blade of grass and burned it up— that's what it was like in there, this concentrated version of the same kind of pressure that people feel all the time."

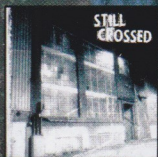
Elliott's anger for what happened in that institution didn't subside. And although his friends and family only intervened to help, Elliott said plainly in a January 2001 interview with *Magnet*, "I'm not a tortured artist, and there's nothing really wrong with me. I just had a bad time for a while."

Reading past interviews, in the context of what happened is maddening. You want so bad to believe that Elliott Smith was just a normal guy who had some bum luck. That he became a little dour now and then, but doesn't everyone? But that wasn't the truth. He was at the peak of creative productivity, getting his new album, *From A Basement On The Hill* ready for the public. He was living with his girlfriend in L.A. He was, by all accounts, content. And then he plunged a knife in his heart. Depression killed him— and although he was one of the special ones, it doesn't matter. The tragedy is that nobody survives this sadness. ■



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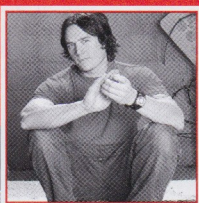
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# KILL YOUR RADIO: 1

Riley from **THRICE** reviews his top 10 favorite records of all time....

## BAD RELIGION



### Bad Religion: *Recipe For Hate*

This is probably one of the most important records in my life, because it helped me through the loss of three friends in a car accident in 1994. The song "Skyscraper" is probably the highlight of this record for me. After my friends passed away, I'd drive around thinking, looking for answers, and blast this record as loud as my car stereo could take. To this day I can't listen to this record without memories of my friends accompanying it. It also marked a change in Bad Religion's sound, as they

experimented with different guitar tones, slide guitar, and there's even a cameo by Eddie Vedder, which I thought was the coolest thing, because Pearl Jam and Bad Religion were my favorite bands when this record came out. Does it get much better than "Kerosene"? (Epitaph: 1993)

## BAD RELIGION



### Bad Religion: *Stranger Than Fiction*

This was a continuation of *Recipe For Hate* for me. I was still reeling from the loss of my friends when it came out and this record served as a soundtrack for the recovery process. It was also the last record that Mr. Brett played on, until *The Process Of Belief*, so it was also powerful because it was a farewell record to Brett and the Bad Religion I'd loved for years. Honestly, I don't think Bad Religion is the same without Mr. Brett being a part of the band, and I think this is probably their best and most

complete album. The song "Marked" is only 1:48 long, but it never fails to give me chills when I listen to it. (Sony: 1994)

## OK COMPUTER

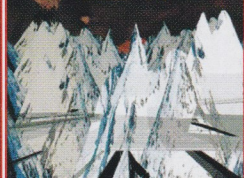


### Radiohead: *OK Computer*

I am ashamed to admit it, but it took me forever to get into this band. I lived on a steady diet of punk and metal for years, and never really gave Radiohead a chance. When I finally bought this record, and listened to it on headphones at night on my patio and just let the music sink in, it took me to a place that very few records ever have. It's a special record that takes you away from everything real for 30 or 40 minutes. There's a reason this record is regarded by many as one of the best records ever.

Because it is. Radiohead set the bar. Everyone else plays catch-up. (EMI: 1997)

## KID A



### Radiohead: *Kid A*

I listen to this record every night before I go to sleep. "How To Disappear Completely" is probably my favorite Radiohead song of all time. A testament to the power of simplicity, the chord progression is nothing out of the ordinary, but the layering of strings, guitar overdubs, and Thom's haunting melody and lyrics make this song incredibly powerful. This record reminds me of nighttime drives across the country in the van. Good times. No matter how stressed, worried, depressed, or angry I

might get, this record can always get me back in the right state of mind. I am also of the opinion that the first five notes of "Everything In Its Right Place" are the most soothing notes in the history of music. (EMI: 2000)

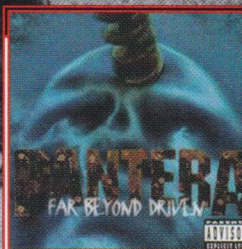
## REFUSED



### Refused: *The Shape Of Punk To Come*

Ask anyone playing aggressive music these days if they were influenced by this record. I'm guessing nine times out of ten, the answer is yes. I actually hadn't heard anything about Refused until I bought this record the day it came out. I used to buy a few records every Tuesday, a couple I knew about, and an experimental purchase. I am pretty sure that this will go down in history as my greatest experimental purchase of all time. This record blew me away from the second I put it on. It's

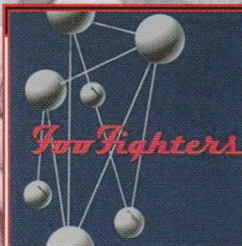
ground breaking, raw, energetic, perfectly sequenced, and probably the most influential rock record of the past 10 years. (Epitaph: 1998)



### Pantera: *Far Beyond Driven*

I saw these guys back in 1994 with Sepultura and it changed my life. I had never experienced truly heavy music in a live setting and I remember the power and brutality of Pantera's set. It inspired me to explore heavier music. Most people consider *Vulgar Display Of Power* Pantera's best record, but there's something about *Far Beyond Driven* that just does it for me. Vinnie Paul's drumming inspired me to buy a double bass pedal and Phil's ability to sing with soul and scream like he

wants to tear your face off convinced me that metal was something I liked and needed more of. This record is responsible for about 1/4 of my record collection. It opened doors for me. (East West: 1994)



### Foo Fighters: *The Colour And The Shape*

If I had an idol, it would be Dave Grohl. Play drums for one of the most important bands of all time, then start your own thing, where you prove to the world that you have a great voice, write amazing and memorable songs, and moonlight as a drummer for QOTSA. Not bad right? *The Color And The Shape* has some bonafide classics on it: "Hero," "Everlong," "Monkey Wrench," and the whole record is filled with the catchiest, generally straightforward rock songs. There's something to be

said for strong melodies, and great arrangements. I am never "not in the mood" for this record. (Capitol: 1997)



### Pearl Jam: *Vs.*

I don't necessarily think this is the *best* Pearl Jam Record. I'd probably choose *Yield* or *Vitalogy*, in that case, but this is my favorite Pearl Jam record because, like Bad Religion's *Stranger Than Fiction*, it helped me cope with the loss of my friends. Everyone was expecting this band to put out "Alive Part 2," and ride the wave of grunge to superstardom, but I think this record is amazing because it shows the band's diversity and ability to rock, then tone things down and

write something really mellow. "Indifference" is probably my favorite track, because it's haunting, atmospheric and has some incredible lyrics about coping, and caring about something, and what you're willing to do to hold on to it, whether it's a feeling, a moment, or a loved one. (Sony: 1993)



### Fiona Apple: *When The Pawn...*

This record snuck into my top 10 because it's on heavy rotation at the moment. I have a habit of killing songs and records by playing the hell out of them. After a while, some records get old and it's off to other things, but I listen to this record daily, and I've probably listened to "On The Bound" 10 times consecutively, on a few occasions. It never gets old. Fiona's voice and melodies are perfect. So much soul and beauty. I am a sucker for piano ballads, and the arrangements on this record are

really interesting. It's a beautifully dark record, and it's one of few records that I own that has love songs on it that aren't sappy or cheesy. If Fiona would like to come over some day and hang out and talk about music, over dinner, and maybe start dating, and give me private piano lessons, and... oh, nevermind. (Epic: 1999)

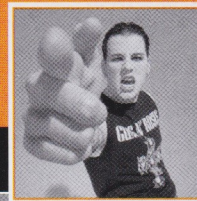


### Cave In: *Jupiter*

This is one of the most inspirational records in my life. The combination of heavy, epic parts, and strong melodies has been something that we have aspired to do. The fact that they recorded this record live (essentially) just blows me away. It kind of reminds me of an angrier more aggressive version of *Kid A*. "Big Riff" is probably my favorite track, but the whole record just amazes me. It flows really well and the arrangements are insane. They are one of the best live bands I've ever seen. (Hydra Head: 2000)



# KILL YOUR RADIO: 2



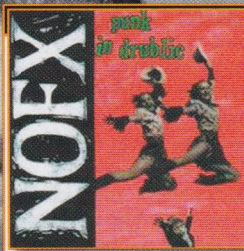
**M. Shadows from AVENGED SEVENFOLD reviews his top 10 records of all time....**



## Dream Theater: *Images And Words*

What can you really say about Dream Theater? They are a band you either love or hate. That's why I love them. Full of over the top passion and musicianship, this record puts these guys in another league. *Images And Words* was the best Dream Theater album ever released. Progressive rock at its best. Another example of keeping the audience's attention while taking them on a journey. Songs like "Metropolis Pt. 1" make this album a masterpiece and made me a music lover. I think the

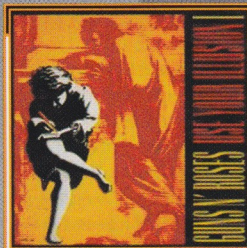
real reason Dream Theater isn't a lot bigger is because most of this stuff is over people's heads, which is their only true flaw. (Elektra: 1992)



## NOFX: *Punk In Drublic*

The Rev and myself stole this album from The Warehouse the day it came out. We had heard a lot about this band NOFX but had yet to hear them. Once we popped it in goose bumps covered my whole body. I had never heard vocal melodies done in that way before. Everything sounded so complete for a punk band. This album has been in rotation for probably seven years now and will be forever. NOFX always has a joking tone in their music but they make a point. Even though I hardly

ever agree with their politics, I respect them for presenting them in an intelligent, creative way. (Epitaph: 1994)



## Guns N' Roses: *Use Your Illusion I and II*

These records have some of the most classic songs ever written in my opinion. You can feel all the emotion in Slash's guitar. Every song has the classic raw and sleazy Guns N' Roses sound. Songs like "Estranged" and "Coma" showed that the band was able to create progressive music and still make pop hits all in one song. They could take you on a journey through music but still be catchy and simple enough for the masses to enjoy it. [My] all time favorite band; with more charisma and talent

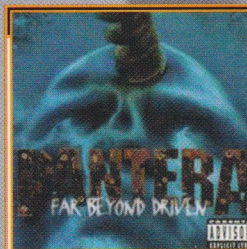
then anyone out there today. Yes, better than *Appetite For Destruction*. (Geffen: 1991)



## Blind Guardian: *Nightfall In Middle-Earth*

Think Queen meets power metal! A concept album that is based on *Lord Of The Rings*. The musicians are passionate about the story and fully equipped with loads of talent. Hansi is one of the best vocalists today but he hadn't truly shown all his greatness until this album. This is the most epic album I have ever heard. It will make you want to fly over to Europe and sit in a pub and sing old drinking songs and get wasted off your ass. Melodic perfection. I always love concept albums because you can

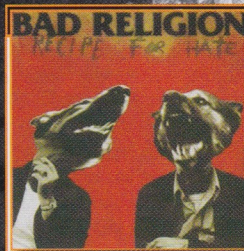
dig deeper into them and this is a perfect example of it at its finest. (Century Media: 1998)



## Pantera: *Far Beyond Driven*

While a lot of people would not agree with me, *Far Beyond Driven* is the most intense, groove oriented Pantera album. *Cowboys From Hell* and *Vulgar Display Of Power* were great albums, but for pure intensity and head bobbing riffs, you gotta look to *Far Beyond Driven*. "White-trash-fuck-you-up-bash-your-skull-in" is all you can think of while listening to this record. Not only are they all first class musicians, Philip Anselmo is the best heavy metal vocalist to walk the planet. Pure screams

with a melodic touch make him stand above the rest. Every song on this record will break your neck from banging your head. Catchy groove riffs and 1, 2 drumming makes this album a classic for all of time. (East West: 1994)



## Bad Religion: *Recipe For Hate*

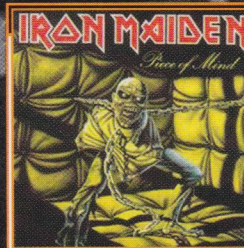
The first punk rock record I ever bought. I heard about them from my uncle who used to play in punk bands. This record sold me on punk rock and everything it was about. Some of the most classic punk songs of all time on this one with "American Jesus" and "Skyscraper." Greg Graffin's thought-provoking lyrics and great vocal patterns are something not found in a lot of punk rock bands. They changed the way punk rock was played and the way religion was looked at by many. (Epitaph: 1993)



## Megadeth: *Countdown To Extinction*

Most people would go with *Rust In Peace* and I don't necessarily blame them. But to me this is where Megadeth crossed over and started writing real songs and not just thrash riffs. Dave Mustaine comes through huge on this one with some of the most unique vocals anyone's ever heard. People call Megadeth a wannabe Metallica, but this was melodic, original, and adventurous for metal at the time. Dave Mustaine makes this album larger than life with over the top lyrics and vocal patterns,

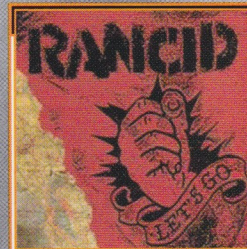
and Marty Friedman wasn't lacking as a guitar player either! (Capitol: 1990)



## Iron Maiden: *Piece Of Mind*

Although most won't agree this is the best Maiden album, I feel it is. A lot of Maiden albums had bigger hits, but this one was more consistent. Not one song jumps out at you on here because they are all equally good. Dual leads, over the top vocals, and one of the best bassists to grace our ears in the metal world. Coming off the smash album *Number Of The Beast*, they had it all at this point. This album is full of catchy sing alongs and gallops. What more can you say about Iron Maiden.

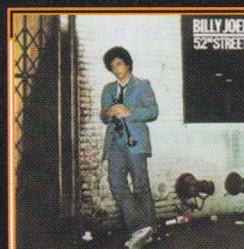
If you don't have every album, get them all soon! (EMI: 1983)



## Rancid: *Let's Go*

I remember getting this album after seeing the video for "Salvation" when I was in 7th grade. This band changed punk rock for me. I was more into new school punk rock and metal and didn't care much for the old school bands except maybe the Misfits, Black Flag and DK. But once I heard Tim Armstrong's voice and the music they were playing, this band blended the old and the new to me in a way that had never been done before. Tim's signature marble mouth vocals and catchy choruses with tons of

energy makes this a punk rock classic. (Epitaph: 1994)



## Billy Joel: *52nd Street*

Had to go with a soft one here, the first Billy Joel album I ever heard. We picked it up in some small town on cassette on our first tour and probably played it 100 times before we all went out and bought the CD. It's special because, as we all know, music is the soundtrack to our lives and this was a special time out on the road with my best friends, touring. It still brings back those memories and has some of the most unforgettable heartfelt songs I've ever heard. I soon bought every

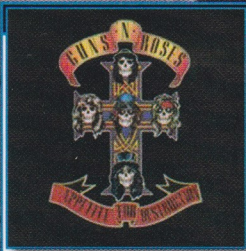
record he ever made and I'm thoroughly pleased. (Sony: 1978)





# KILL YOUR RADIO: 3

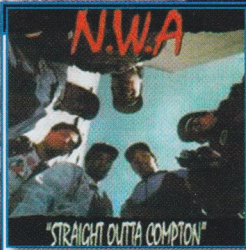
Brendan from LAWRENCE ARMS reviews his top 10 favorite records....



## Guns N' Roses: *Appetite For Destruction*

This is the filthiest album ever made. It's what rock and roll has tried to be ever since [its beginnings]. These guys scared the shit out of me when I was a kid and they scared my parents as well. It was like everything that anyone ever said about rock and roll was finally coming true. These dudes really were going to come to your town, drink your dad's beer, fuck your sister, trash your house, incite a riot, give speed to your little brother, and tell everyone to fuck off in your front yard on the way out. "It's So Easy,"

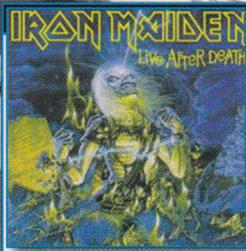
"Nightrain," and "Mr. Brownstone" are some of my personal faves. (Geffen: 1987)



## N.W.A.: *Straight Outta Compton*

This is dangerous music. It's been parodied so many times now by movies like *CB4* and dipshit rappers alike that it's easy to lose sight of how fucking badass it is. Hip-hop has a tendency to become dated really quickly. As new shit evolves the old stuff can't help but seem kind of primitive. However, *Straight Outta Compton* is as relevant now as it ever was. Ice Cube is flawless on this record. His rhymes are smart, hilarious, and simultaneously intricate and effortless. "Fuck The Police" is also one of the coolest,

most insurgent songs ever written. When's the last time any so-called political punk bands wrote something that created a stir like "Fuck The Police"? This is one of the toughest albums ever made, and it will never cease to terrify and offend. (Ruthless: 1988)



## Iron Maiden: *Live After Death*

When I was ten, I got this album on double gatefold vinyl for no reason other than I thought the cover looked evil. My stepmother bought it for me and I listened to it constantly, pretty sure that I was going to hell the entire time. Fast forward nine years. I'm at the Fireside Bowl in Chicago and I get into a discussion about Iron Maiden with this gigantic fat guy in a sleeveless Twisted Sister T-shirt. He tells me that his favorite Maiden album is *Killers*. When I tell him that I like *Live After Death*, he scoffs at me,

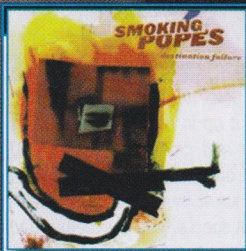
"Whatever, weekender." Now, I know, real fans don't go for the greatest hits collections, but this is a live album and if some fat Twisted Sister fan is gonna call me a weekender for liking the album with the definitive versions of "The Trooper," "2 Minutes to Midnight," and "Hallowed Be Thy Name" then bring on the fucking weekend. (EMI: 1985)



## Fifteen: *Buzz*

It's kind of hard to express how into Fifteen I was in my late teens. I thought they had all the answers and the coolest politics (and attitudes) in the world. I no longer think any of these things but I still have a place in my heart for them. Up until *Buzz*, I thought music was all about being perfect, but after hearing this record I realized that stuff can be just as powerful if it's shitty. Jeff Ott can't sing in tune to save his life, the band is sloppy, and it sounds like it's recorded in a tin box, but none of

that matters. The passion in every note overrides any technical shortcomings. This record is every bit as urgent as the Crimpshrine full-length. Songs like "Abel's Song," "Fifteen" and "Predisposition" will probably never get the credit they deserve as some of the most powerful to ever come out of the East Bay scene. (Grass: 1996)



## Smoking Popes: *Destination Failure*

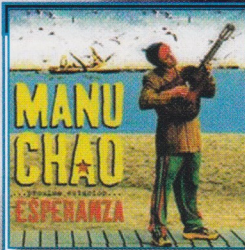
The Smoking Popes have inspired every single punk rock musician who has come out of Chicago in the last ten years. Josh Caterer has been the gold-standard singer, songwriter, and guitarist for as long as I've been involved in the Chicago scene. This record shit-talks their major label and A&R guy, it [conveys] heartbreak with devastating honesty without being cheesy, it covers a song from *Willy Wonka*, and, in one of the most surreal moments ever committed to tape, and features Carterer crooning, "Don't be a pussy all your life." This is the record that we all wish that we were talented enough to make. Funny, sad, sarcastic, angry and resigned to failure; just like the Popes, this record is cool as shit without being pretentious or self-indulgent. (Capitol: 1997)



## Michael Jackson: *Thriller*

This record is good. Don't even pretend it's not. Here's how good it is: It's the first tape I ever got, the first twelve inch I ever got, and also the first record I ever got my ass kicked for being into. When I was about six, this bigger kid named Mike came up and asked in a really threatening way, "Hey, what kind of music do you like?" My response, based on the only record I owned at the time was of course, Jacko. He proceeded to call M.J. a "fag," and tell me that Steve Perry (who sang the

craptacular hit "Missing You") was way better. I stood up for *Thriller*, and I got beaten down. But to this day, I will insist that Michael Jackson is way cooler than Steve fucking Perry. (Epic: 1982)



## Manu Chao: *Proxima Estacion: Esperanza*

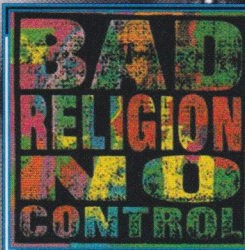
This guy is big all over the world, including the U.S., but for some reason, here he is marginalized to the world music section. You know that theory about how everyone in the world likes Bob Marley, regardless of what else they are into? I submit here that the same could be said for Manu Chao, were he as widely known. He sings in English, Spanish, Italian, and French and switches so seamlessly between the languages that it seems like a whole new super language. This is somewhere between

dance music, folk music, reggae, blues, and Ween. Stoned or not, this record is perfect all the way through. (Virgin: 2001)



## The Pogues: *Rum, Sodomy & The Lash*

A few years ago, my friend Pete and I went to London to see the Pogues play a reunion show with Shane MacGowan. It was easily the most amazing show I've ever seen. Everyone there was singing along. It's the first time that I've ever seen little kids, under ten, singing along with the same passion as their grandparents who brought them. *Rum, Sodomy & The Lash* is their best record, and, if for nothing else, should make any top ten list for the amazing "The Band Played Waltzing Matilda." (WEA: 1985)



## Bad Religion: *No Control*

Who knew that rock music could be intelligent? This record blew my fucking doors off when I first heard it. I can't even begin to express what I was feeling as I sat in front of my boombox at age 12, 22 minutes after putting this tape in for the first time. This is the record that changed my life and made me realize that music could mean something without being wimpy. That nerds could kick serious ass. That being smart and pissed off was about the most bad ass dangerous thing that you

could be. This record inspired me to make music and to read books. Records this good forever changed the face of the musical landscape, and this is no exception— all those crappy "melodic hardcore" bands that you are so into got their inspiration right here. (Epitaph: 1989)



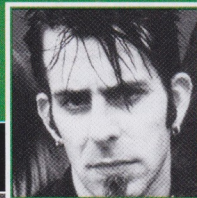
## No Means No: *Wrong*

This album is absolutely fucking perverse. It's just fucking freaky the whole way through. On "The Tower" they sound like some sort of metal band, and then on "Big Dick," they sound like some crazy funk band. Then, they sound just like Poison on "Oh No! Bruno" Metal, funk, and Poison hardly sound like a great combo, but this is one of those things that just comes together. It's that whole Turbonegro "gay sailor" thing way before it was cool. In fact, it's doing just about everything way

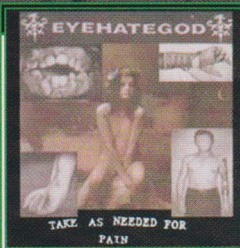
before it was cool, and some shit that was never cool, and they make it all fucking amazing. If you told me that these guys were aliens, it wouldn't surprise me at all. (Alternative Tentacles: 1989)



# KILL YOUR RADIO: 4



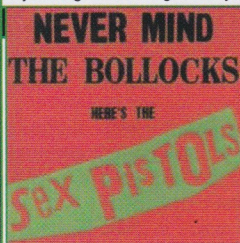
Randy of LAMB OF GOD reviews his 10 favorite records of all time...



## Eyehategod: *Take As Needed For Pain*

During one of the worst winters of my life, I woke up every morning and before getting out of bed, I'd reach over, hit play, and this record would come blasting out of my stereo. Bleak, raw, and crushingly heavy, their music is true desperation put to ground-shaking New Orleans blues punk metal and perfectly fit my mental state. Years later we became friends. The last time they were here, I was living in the aptly named Dirtbag Manor. All the doors were broken and a window was the only entrance/exit.

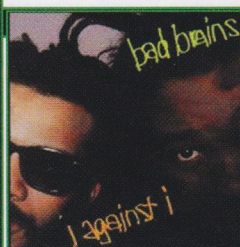
After a long night of partying, I went to a coffee shop for some joe where I ran into a friend of mine I hadn't seen in a while. He looked at me strangely and said, "Um, dude, did I see Eyehategod breaking out of your house this morning?" (Century Media: 1993)



## Sex Pistols: *Never Mind The Bollocks...*

This was the first record that opened my eyes (and ears) to real music. I lived in a tiny redneck town with nothing to listen to but commercial radio. Then during the summer after sixth grade, I went to a camp for "gifted kids" and this little hellion named Jason made me a tape of *Never Mind The Bollocks*. I immediately knew it was the type of music I needed—angry, loud, and intelligent. Although some people have dismissed the Pistols as Malcolm McLaren's creation, I don't believe that Johnny Rotten's snotty variety

of genius was created by anything but his own little beady-eyed cranium. The way they screwed the record labels was magnificent. How in the hell do you get paid to get dropped from labels you never released a thing on? If only I could do that. (Warner Bros.: 1977)



## Bad Brains: *I Against I*

Take four black dudes from D.C. into punk rock, add reggae attitude, shake well, and you get Bad Brains. Unbelievable live, and immaculate on wax, they define innovation. I was with a buddy of mine when we ran into HR. He needed a ride, so we got in my buddy's car where HR popped in a tape. When we asked what it was, he simply turned it up and said, "The new Bad Brains, mon..." The last time I saw them, HR was walking around all day holding a bird cage containing

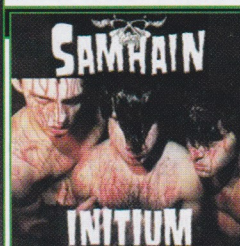
an evil looking parrot, occasionally muttering what I presumed was Rasta wisdom to it. That night they played "Re-Ignition" and I lost my mind, charging into the pit to thrust my creaking bones around like a kid again. Any band that can make me slam dance at my old age is indeed a force to be reckoned with. (SST: 1986)



## Big Black: *Atomizer*

Say what you will about Steve Albini—misanthrope, elitist, nerd, or just jackass—the man knows how to make abrasive music. I was listening to a lot of standard punk rock and I kept seeing reviews of Big Black. I bought *Atomizer* and was confused and impressed. This was thinking man's punk rock. Listen to the classic "Kerosene." It sounds like sheet metal being ripped apart. The band had a propensity for blowing things up, as well as snidely insulting their audience, always a mark of refined musical

taste. Part of their genius was breaking up at the height of their popularity. Albini and crew knew they had made their mark and it was time to step down. They swung, connected, and got the hell out. Well done, gentlemen. (Touch & Go: 1986)



## Samhain: *Initium/Unholy Passion*

Although Glenn Danzig is best known for his work with the Misfits, he reached dark perfection with Samhain. Murky, moody, and conceptually evil, this record is about finding the dark place inside us all and embracing it. Although the song "Human Pony Girl" is not on this record, my buddy Charlie had a fantasy about doing a chick to that song. We had adjacent dorm rooms and one night he brought home a hot punk rock female and I soon heard the headboard thumping from the next room. So, I

did my boy a favor. I turned my speakers to the wall, put in Samhain, and let "Human Pony Girl" rip at top volume. I heard Charlie scream "FUCK YEAH!" and the pounding increased to earthquake proportions. The next day he thanked me profusely, and I felt proud to have furthered good sex and horror business in one fell swoop. (E-magine: 1984)



## Slayer: *Reign In Blood*

Well shit, it's Slayer. What else needs to be said? I guess I will paraphrase Mr. Kerry King, "Slayer is the perfect combination of metal and punk." *Reign In Blood* embodies that. I have no further comment. (Universal: 1986)



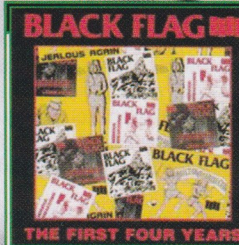
## Lynyrd Skynyrd: *Pronounced Leh-Nerd Skin-Nerd*

Growing up in a redneck town in the South, I couldn't help but hear a lot of Skynyrd. So much Skynyrd, in fact, that I grew to hate them and it was not until years later that their music began to speak to me as a Southern guy in a rock n' roll band. The tours, fighting, partying, the craziness that is this lifestyle—it's all there. Listen to "Simple Man" and you'll learn how we do it in Dixie. I saw Skynyrd last summer at the Virginia State Fair. I have never seem more rebel flags and mullets assembled in one livestock-smelling place in my life. The performance was amazing and I even held up my Bic for the dreaded "Freebird." Many beers later I stumbled out of the fairgrounds clutching my ticket stub and a "Support Southern Rock" shirt that I wear on every tour now. (MCA: 1973)



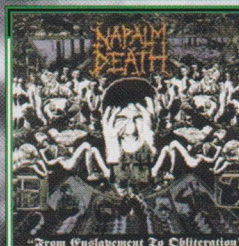
## Thrasher Magazine's *Skate Volume 3*

Back in the day before I became old and brittle, I skated every day and this record was in the boombox every time I hit the ramp. Nothing gets you pumped up enough to drop in and try some stupid suicidal trick like hard, fast, brutal punk and metal. Influential crossover groups like C.O.C., Septic Death, and the mighty Accused led to more than one bloody injury for me. I still have a copy of this tape, and I still eat shit while listening to it every now and then. While on the topic of skateboarding, what is up with all these skate videos playing rap music while kids in pants four sizes too large do floppy-dippy tricks that they can only land once in their life? I enjoy rap for dancing and mackin' on honeys, but for skating it's gotta be hard, blazingly fast, raw punk rock and metal. (High Speed Productions: 1985)



## Black Flag: *The First Four Years*

You gotta love a band like the Flag. Any group with such a ruthless work ethic, relentless tour schedule, and shows that caused riots and police persecution is worthy of respect. This collection of pre-Rollins tunes is a sonic bulldozer on speed, crushing everything in its path. Plus the song "Six Pack" has the best line about girlfriends and beer in music history: "My girlfriend asked which one I liked better / Six pack / I hope the answer won't upset her / Six pack!" I saw the last Black Flag tour, and Rollins scared the shit out of me. He was standing in front of a mirror screaming "I hate you" before the band had played the first note. I could tell he meant it and it was creeping me the fuck out. I don't usually get band logos as tattoos, but I have saved some real estate for my Flag bars. (SST: 1984)



## Napalm Death: *From Enslavement To Obliteration*

One night, years ago, I was in some dude's car going to go skate downtown and this unearthly noise came screaming out of his speakers. "What in the hell is that?" I asked. It was Napalm Death. Lee Dorrian's vocals became a huge influence on me. The guy sounds like an enraged mountain gorilla on a killing spree, with someone occasionally stomping on his nuts. Napalm's early records started the grindcore genre and were years ahead of everyone else. Blisteringly fast and fiercely political, these guys have spawned tons of imitators. For those of you who indulge in psychedelics, I advise you to drop about eight hits of acid and listen to track six on this record repeatedly until you can actually understand what Lee Dorian is saying. Then hide in a corner or go to the loony bin for a little rest. (Earache: 1988)



# VIDEO GAMES

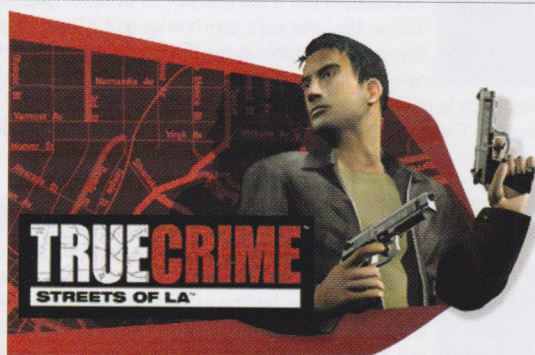
**The Simpsons: Hit and Run (PS2/Xbox, Vivendi Universal)**- Even though Tracy Ullman is now a distant memory, her show will always be credited for giving birth to an American icon: *The Simpsons*. Like any media darling, *The Simpsons* have been marketed to death. From do-it-yourself abortion kits, to re-usable tampons, the fab-five from Springfield have sold it all, including their own video games.

The Simpsons: Hit and Run is a vast improvement on past efforts, namely the two mind numbing 8-bit Nintendo games that, much like the first season of the show, were entertaining for a while but eventually caused extreme boredom and mild headaches.

Hit and Run features a nicely detailed re-creation of Springfield. The ability to visit Moe's Tavern, the Kwik-E-Mart, and Springfield Elementary while sitting on your couch and smoking your roommate's pot is pretty sweet. And Apu's pimped out muscle car is bound to increase the popularity of liquor store employees worldwide.

On the downside, this game is yet another Vice City clone in which you steal cars, complete missions and roam around town beating the crap out of innocent civilians. While this now generic format worked for Vice City, there's something a little unsettling about watching Homer kick an elderly man nearly to death.

While this game is fun up until a point, like the show, it eventually wears thin. Missions become repetitive, the novelty wanes, and you're left remembering how good it used to be. Purchase this game only if you're a die hard fan of the show (or anything resembling GTA). Otherwise, a quick rental should suffice. ★★★★★ [Noel Shankel]



**True Crime: Streets of L.A. (PS2/Xbox, Activision)**- I live in the sprawling metropolis known as Los Angeles. Some call it the City of Angels. Angelenos embody many personas: botoxed Bel Aire housewives, the drunken homeless of Skid Row, pre-op transvestites roaming Santa Monica Blvd. luring you in with a large-handed wave.

For me, however, the real angels of this city lie just out of reach, in clubs which offer special services to special gentlemen. I can't read the names on the door, but I know what goes on behind them and, oh, how I long to be a part of it. Perhaps if I was Korean, or spoke Korean, or knew anyone who was Korean there would be a chance, my tender lotus blossoms, my sweet Korean whores, but as a white man, there is place for me.

True Crime: Streets of LA, allows you to appreciate the city's digitally recreated splendor as Nick Kang, a renegade cop on a mission to avenge his father's murder. The game itself is unremarkable, but if I were like Nick Kang, I would have no problem gaining entrance to those Oriental love dens. Shit, I'd be with a different Korean hookers every night. For now, Santa Monica Blvd. will have to do. ★★★★★ [John Streit]

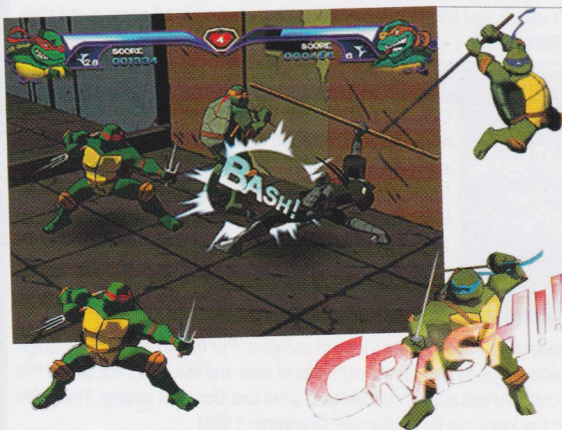
**LOTR: Return of the King (PS2/Xbox, EA Games)**- It's a problem as old as time itself. Why do video games have to be so friggin' expensive? Movies usually cost somewhere between \$5 and \$10 to check out in the theatre, but video games typically set you back \$50 a pop.

I would think those unfortunate souls who actually have to cough up their hard-earned money would expect a game, especially one based on a movie, to provide more entertainment than the film counterpart.

Return of the King is not a bad game, but it fails to deliver on the "more entertaining than the movie" promise. Instead of being a long and intricate game, Return of the King is short and difficult. The more often you die, the more this game begins to suck.

The graphics are a little cleaner than The Two Towers, but the designers at EA decided this meant they could cram even more members of the fellowship, orcs, and cave trolls on screen at once. How could I tell this was a problem? Well, once the screen starts looking like one of those magic-eye pictures and you start wiping the tears from your cheeks, then you know there's a problem. Maybe if I had more skills at bringing in the free shit, and I convinced some company they needed to send me a big-screen TV, this would be less of a problem, but alas, such is not the case.

Despite my complaints, this can still be a fun game if you combine Internet cheat codes (to help with the whole "dying too often" thing) and your local video game rental shop (to help with the whole "pissing away your hard-earned money" thing). ★★★★★ [Jake Futernick]



**Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (PS2/Xbox, Konami)**- It won't be long before they start teaching college classes on this stuff. Depending on your age and gender, employing various scientific formulas, it can be determined exactly what cartoons you watched as a child. If you're a 20-something and you're a guy, you probably liked some combination of *Scooby Doo*, *Thundercats*, *The Jetsons*, *Transformers*, *GI Joe*, and *He-man*. If you're a girl you probably liked *Care Bears*, *My Little Pony*, *Rainbow Brite*, or *Jem*. The list goes on.

*Duck Tales*, *Tiny Toons*, and its spin-off *Pinky And The Brain* helped bridge the gap between Gen X and Gen Y, and I can say with some conviction that the cutoff point between the generations can be drawn with the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. You would be hard pressed to find someone over the age of 21 who would readily admit to liking the turtles.

But enough of this, I've got a video game review to write. The storyline in this game is bad to say the least, and it doesn't take long for the levels to jumble into a never-ending mess. Despite all this, the game is moderately fun to play. You can beat enough ass, especially with a sidekick, that the game is fun in a bright flashing colors that make you feel warm and fuzzy kind of way. Over the age of 21 myself, I never really watched the cartoon, but in the game, I'd have to cast my vote for Donatello as my favorite turtle. Cowabunga dude! ★★★★★ [Jake Futernick]



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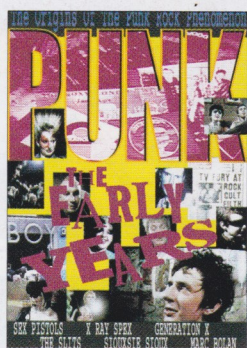
Carthartic, dark guitar pop and  
soaring vocals paint a bleak  
picture of bitterness and regret.

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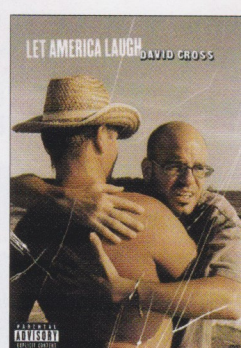
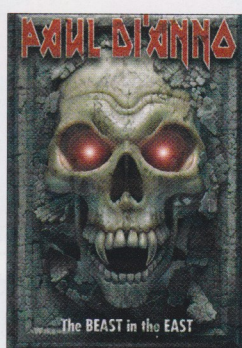


# DVD REVIEWS



**Punk: The Early Years** (Cleopatra/MVD)- If you're under the impression that punk didn't exist before Green Day's *Dookie*, or worse, if you actually think that Good Charlotte has *anything* to do with punk, you are sadly mistaken! This DVD is an appropriate place to start. Like the title says, it's a documentary about the originators of punk (at least the British style) that follows the format of other documentaries that came before it: start with the Sex Pistols, then move on to the rest. That's not a bad thing, mind you, especially if you've never visually experienced the Pistols in their prime. This DVD wins out because of the amazing live footage of absolutely *essential* bands like Generation X (featuring a young Billy Idol), the Adverts (singer T.V. Smith was and still is probably the most gifted and intelligent song writer of the punk era), Eddie And The Hot Rods, and of course, the Pistols themselves. This is an excellent and colorful overview of this legendary and exciting scene, and includes candid interviews with all of the bands and a few others; the most memorable being Marc Bolan of T. Rex's last interview ever, where he gushes over his love for punk. If this DVD doesn't blow your hair back, you and punk rock were just never meant to be. **The Turk**

**Minor Threat: DC Space, Buff Hall, 9:30 Club (Dischord)**- 23 years ago punk rock's angrier, more aggressive bastard brother burst onto the streets to save the dying scene from complete annihilation. Faster, tougher, and ready to fight, hardcore gave kids the kick in the ass that punk had tried to deliver only a few, short years before. At the front line, alongside Bad Brains and Black Flag, was an unstoppable Minor Threat— straight edge legends to a lifer like myself. Being the nostalgic anti-scenester



that I am, this DVD gave me more reasons not to forget my roots. Compiled from three shows, from the beginning, middle, and end of their run as a band, this acts as the no-bull collector's item for the no-bull hardcore enthusiast. No flashy motion graphics, no corny sound bytes— just good music and DIY footage with features that let you skip around the set list and jump straight to the songs you want to hear first. The quality of the recording is what would be expected from amateur, '80's equipment; yet, they're shot right from the pit, giving the footage a moonstomper's appeal. Watching Ian's interview at the end, gave me hope, and proved that even the most inarticulate of speakers can be a genius of mind. Hardcore is our tradition to carry on. Pick this up and be reminded of who helped light that torch. **Vinny Panza**

**Paul Di'Anno The Beast In The East (Metal Mind Productions)**- Here's a hello from the gutter. Paul Di'Anno is back. While most stand dumbfounded, scratching their heads, wondering who he is, where he went, and why he has returned altogether. Di'Anno's claim to fame, much to his dismay I imagine, is his former job as the vocalist for Iron Maiden. Di'Anno sang on the first two Maiden albums and has never released anything that has received more than fleeting interest or modest fanfare since. Well, he's back, and he is milking his past involvement with Maiden to the fullest. He cops the band's logo, and covers their songs— even "Transylvania," an instrumental piece that he didn't even have a hand in writing. Petty jabs aside, Di'Anno and his band Killers (come on now) competently play their original music and Maiden classics to a crowd that is more responsive than one would expect. For

a veritable has-been, Di'Anno's voice is strong and commanding. Ultimately the band are seemingly capable players, thus making a solid unit, if not a tad outdated one. I can't see anyone other than a rabid enthusiast paying money to own this. Maiden mascot Eddie lives comfortably while Di'Anno is desperately trying to survive. **Evan Fields**

**David Cross: Let America Laugh (Sub Pop)**- Residents of Atlanta, Georgia agree: there are cars in heaven, and angels drive the cars, but there's no pollution. No shit. Makes me want to take a whiz for Tibetan freedom. Also, Little Rock sucks dick and Nashville is really a lot like New York and L.A. (no, really, I'm serious). Oh what a man learns from his travels. Though *Let America Laugh* is doubtlessly more entertaining than Cross' last cinematic endeavor, *Run Ronnie Run*, it left me, comedically blue-balled. This DVD was made more for David Cross than for his fans. Much of the live material was taken straight from the same shows used on his CD *Shut Up, You Fucking Baby* (2002, SubPop). It has its moments, but I am really left wanting more. The shining moment of the whole thing is when an acquaintance of Mr. Cross in Eugene, Oregon, after discovering that David lives in New York (and after drinking copious amounts of PBR and accidentally leaving his gas grill burning unattended for twelve hours) claims that he one time beat up all The Strokes at once. Oh, how I wish I could believe! Perhaps David Cross is a bit more interesting in character roles than he is in documentary form, but I've still got his back. Hey, it's worth checking out, but don't expect it to be as good as *Mr. Show*. And don't forget, Nashville is an industry market. **Elliot Glass**



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**Interviews:** Tristeza, Ultimate Fakebook, Death Cab for Cutie, Drowningman, BS2000 (Adrock of the Beastie Boy's side project), Propagandhi, Dillinger 4, This Year's Model, Godspeed you Black Emperor, Tugboat Annie, Cave-in, Nora, Hanging Like a Hex, Glasseater, Eastern Youth, Melissa Howard (of MTV's the Real World).

**Features:** An in-depth, investigative article on the evils of Starbucks (amazing!!!), The Professional Gentleman of Leisure, Shake ya Ass: Mystikal, an article on peace in the Eiddle East, why Ben Affleck sucks, etc.

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**Features:** The post-modern appeal of the mullet, cell-phone etiquette, indie rock and Napster, Destroying the Evil Empire #2 (further development into the death of Starbucks), fiction, Mike Ski (Brother's Keeper), Bob Nanna (Braid/Hey Mercedes), Atom and his Package, Tim Barry (Avail) and Lance Hahn (J Church) review their top ten favorite records of all time.

**CD Sampler:** 27 Song Sampler CD: Including songs by Fall Silent, Nora, Spark Lights the Friction, Recover, De La Hoya, Strike Anywhere, Glasseater, Angels in the Architecture, Billy Music, The White Octave, The Fairlanes, All Else Failed, Fairweather, and more.

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SOLD OUT

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**Features:** Conflict: Desert Storm, proof that drugs, patriotism, and guns do not mix; Paris in the Spring, art collectives and burning flesh; The Star Wars Holiday Special; Focus: retrospective of the work of photographer Dan Monick.

**Plus:** Brian and Skully of The Reunion Show, Ken of 18 Visions, and Ryan of Black Widows write exclusive, in-depth reviews of their favorite records of all time!

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**Plus:** Jeff of Starflyer 59, Eric of Ultimate Fakebook, Mark Mallman, and Keith of Every Time I Die write exclusive, in-depth reviews of their favorite records of all time!

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**Features:** Coreweb.com: The Rise and Fall of a porn empire, Down And Dirty at the Daytona 500, Hometown Heroes: New York Taxi Cab Service, Rambo III: Operation Afghanistan.

**Plus:** Great pictures, great photography, letters, 4 Black bands, 4 Bloody bands. Shai Hulud, Sea and Cake, The Blood Brothers, and Joan of Arc review their favorite records of all time.

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**Features:** Eddie Murphy's slow decline; John Travolta is my God: The mystery of Scientology; Banksy: The UK's Shepard Fairey; Ali G: Man, Myth, Legend; Hometown Heroes: Invades London; Village Voice Personals: and perverted phone calls. 11 pages of record reviews, video game reviews, web page reviews, and DVD reviews.

**CD Sampler:** An 8-song live CD by Haste (Century Media Records).

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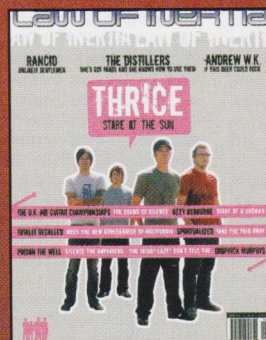
**Features:** Kaiju Big Battel, California's new Guvernator, Diary Of A Sadman: Ozzy Osbourne revealed, The U.K. Air Guitar Championships!

**Plus:** Strike Anywhere, Ted Leo, From Autumn To Ashes, and Glassjaw review their top ten favorite records of all time in our famous Kill Your Radio section!

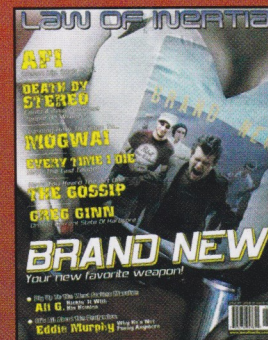
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## THE ACTUAL

### *Songs On Radio Idaho* (Eyeball)

If there's any disc in the world that proves pop-punk is still very much alive and a viable source of enjoyment, let The Actual's debut full-length be the harbinger of such greatness. This is a sublime, joyous blend of the Descendents, Jawbreaker, Treble Charger, Marvelous 3, Shades Apart, and any other pop-punk act with more than half a brain. *Songs On Radio Idaho* is a sure-fire collection of superbly-crafted pop-punk, sans the redundancy and blubber that affect even the best acts in the genre. Guitarist/vocalist Max Bernstein coughs up complex yet thoroughly appealing guitar riffs, throaty, molasses-coated vocals, alongside bassist Jeremy Bonsall's Karl Alvarez-esque straight-eighth countermelodies and the solid precision of drummer Jeff Keenan. *Radio Idaho* is truly one of the year's finest antidotes to all lackadaisical, uninteresting pop-punk that is Sum 41, Good Charlotte and Simple Plan—they're not trying to be cute, funny, nor schtick-laden—and deserve only the highest of accolades and recommendations. Pop-punk's brightest honor students have arrived to school all in attendance. Hold tight! **Waleed Rashidi**



## AGAINST ME

### *As The Eternal Cowboy* (Fat Wreck)

The latest installment in Fat Wreck's "Against/Anti" series of oppositional monikers (who, ironically, toured with both Rise Against and Anti-Flag simultaneously, making for one hostile listing of bands), Against Me! ride a unique punk tangent; biting, sarcastic lyrics that are a nod above the usual cast of characters, jangly, clean-channel guitars (for the most part, a la the-gone-but-not-forgotten band The Marshes), all wrapped in a seemingly ramshackle, loosey-goose package. It's all performed competently and, best of all, concisely. 25 minutes will deliver a succinct set of 11 tracks, closing quietly with "Cavalier Eternal (sic)," a simple acoustic number about the time-honored, alcohol-drenched love worries. Attention-deficit generation, please take note. **Waleed Rashidi**



## ALL OUT WAR

### *Condemned To Suffer* (Victory)

This record couldn't be much heavier if it were pressed on stainless steel plates. Fans of this New York City quintet have been eagerly awaiting the follow up to the band's 1998 release, *For Those Who Were Crucified* for five long years, and it's safe to say that they won't be disappointed. The drum tracks, laid down by the band's returning original drummer, Jesse Sutherland, are nothing shy of relentless and the brutal guitar licks pound harder than your speakers will be able to handle. The lyrics on this record serve to remind the metal world that frontman Mike Score is one of the best in the business. This is the kind of release that people need to show them that metal doesn't necessarily require gimmicky stage shows or long-winded singing. It's good to see brutal and heavy music being made by tough guys that really care. With a couple more releases like this, Between The Buried And Me's *The Silent Circus* and Darkest Hour's *Hidden Hands Of A Sadist Nation*, Victory could regain some of the street cred they lost when they signed Taking Back Sunday. Fuck emo, long live real metal. **Stan Horaczek**



## ANTI-FLAG

### *The Terror State* (Fat Wreck)

First things first, this CD gives executive producer credits to Tom Morello, Rage Against The Machine's innovative, daring axe-man. Why Tom Morello would be interested in politico-punk that sounds more like Blink 182 than Black Sabbath or Run DMC, but some of you might find that a strong selling point indeed. With that said, I've always enjoyed Anti-Flag. Even when I saw them years ago at small DIY punk venues they were always catchy and poignant. I could have done without songs like "Kill The Rich," considering my parents aren't exactly struggling—and let's be honest, neither are the parents of 99% of the people who will pick up this record—but their socially conscious sing-alongs that combine British pop-punk from the late-'70s with a sound that works very well on the current Fat Wreck roster were always strong. And let's give Anti-Flag a hand for displaying some sort of so-called aware message in a time when most punk bands would rather sing about rocking out or being bad-asses. While the theme of this record might be a bit worn at this point (e.g. George W. is a jerk, The Patriot Act is making us all into soldiers, etc.) for anyone who reads the newspaper on a daily basis, but set to this competent, if somewhat forgettable, pop-punk one could easily be galvanized into action after seeing A-F live. **Ross Siegel**



## ANTIOCH ARROW

### *The Gems Of Masochism* (Three One G)

Antioch Arrow were a '90s noise band that were often known to incorporate goth influences. *The Gems Of Masochism* is their last album, and it's a goth masterpiece. It has been completely out of circulation for quite some time, but Three One G are kindly bringing it back. You can still hear the scratchy, noisy guitar interludes and chaotic drumming that is standard fare for bands associated with the label, but this album is also dominated by breathy vocals about mascara and dying, epic-length songs with pianos galore, and a general funeral dirge aura. The closest contemporary comparisons I can draw are to earlier, noisier 90 Day Men, or the more intense, compelling, and harder Pleasure Forever material. This album is complex and dark, yet fully aware of the kitsch of goth, which makes it less embarrassing to listen to, and more importantly, much better than most of the early '90s goth favorites that most people have hidden at the bottom of their CD collections. **Molly Samuel**



## APOLLO SUNSHINE

### *Katonah* (SpinART)

Power pop is a really dangerous term these days. Originally coined by The Who, the phrase has gone on to be used to describe bands as diverse as The Ramones, Cheap Trick, Weezer, and various bands who are looking to escape the emo tag (or curse). Today, none of what is commonly referred to as power pop has anything to do with the literal definition: straight ahead pop music with a powerful edge. I'm not sure what the kids these days are referring to Apollo Sunshine as, but they certainly embody a keen pop sensibility that relies on a little power to get their melodies across. Not only that, but these guys have progressive tendencies that could only be a result of intensive studying at the prestigious Berklee College of Music. Opening with

a collage that sounds like a Disney tape I used to listen to as a kid, that would have analog synth and keyboard enthusiasts shitting their vintage corduroys in envy, the band mix their own brand of off-kilter and uniquely composed pop with 2112-era Rush's progressive edge. The results are beautiful songs that put a new spin on an old formula and will have many pop songsters on their toes just trying to keep up. The ante has been upped a notch. **Aaron Lefkove**



## A SMALL VICTORY

### *The Pieces We Keep EP* (Lobster)

With layered guitar riffs, and heartfelt vocals, A Small Victory shows a lot of promise as a band. It's a shame their new EP sounds exactly like every other CD currently collecting dust in my pop-punk graveyard. If you have more than two CDs that sound like Hot Rod Circuit, you don't need another one. **Matt Neatock**



## THE BACKUP PLAN

### *Dearest Whomever* (New Day Rising)

For those of you who miss Kid Dynamite as much as I do, this album is for you. The Backup Plan delivers 12 songs, in less than 20 minutes, for one of the most enjoyable listening experiences since *Shorter, Faster, Louder*. Every song on *Dearest Whomever* is tight and explosive, with anthemic hooks reminiscent of NOFX and those little melodic twists that are all the rage these days. And it doesn't stop with the guitars. From "I made a mix tape for you one last time / and I smashed it into shards of broken plastic" (on the song "Holyshitoholyshitoholyfuckingshit"), to "Amid the bloodshot glances of catastrophe I've found / I grabbed sorrow by the hair and held that fucker under till it drowned" (on "Are You Writing This Shit Down Ace?"). The Backup Plan's lyrics are just as powerful as the music. It's refreshing to see a band that can make a fast, loud, and—most importantly—entertaining album. Make this one of the next CDs you buy. **Matt Neatock**



## BURNT BY THE SUN

### *The Perfect Is The Enemy Of The Good* (Relapse)

The thing that I liked about the last two BBTS releases were that they seemed to have conquered the two absolutely essential elements it takes to be a listenable metal band: breakdowns and blast beats. On this, the band's second full-length, they seem to have taken a

different approach to raising hell. The most obvious difference is that the songs no longer strain to get to the two-minute mark, with a few even hovering on the doorstep of four. The tempos are noticeably slower and the rhythms are less technical and more groove-driven than previous material. I have no real complaints about this record but at the same time there's nothing that really stands out about it. The vocals are standard issue and the passion that was so present on the band's first record seems to have slowed down with the tempos. Some people will argue and say that the band is "progressing," but if you like heavy, well-produced metal then you'll want to check this out. If you're all about speed and power, check out their first full length, *Soundtrack To The Personal Revolution*. **Stan Horaczek**



## THE BUSINESS

### *Hardcore Hooligan* (BYO/Burning Heart)

Admittedly, I had some odd feelings about this one before the shrink wrap was broken. The packaging and pictures on it scream metalcore, and on the back of the jewel case singer Mickey Fitz appears topless and with "FITZ" tattooed in an old English arch on his abdomen. Christ, have these guys been touring with Madball too much? The Business are still one of the best Oi! groups of all time, even if their relentless exposure since breaking into the American touring circuit has weakened their impact. This album is a bunch of new and old songs (some re-recorded) entirely focused upon football (or soccer for all you Americans). I'm not really sure that this manages to be more than a mere vanity project, because there are some real throwaways here. Sure, they dragged out "Maradona" and "Handball" from 1994's *Keep The Faith* album, but neither needed a re-recording and they both suffer from it. "Viva Bobby Moore" came off the same album and should have stayed there. A faster, gang-chorused "Saturday's Heroes" completely ruins the original from the mid-'80s, even changing the lyrics to mention being caught on videotape. There is a decent track in "Terrace Lost Its Soul," but aside from several tracks that wisely incorporate crowd chants, this album only serves as a vehicle for various rants about the sport that should've stayed in the pub, lads. **du proserpio**



## CANNAE

### *Horror* (Prosthetic)

I'll take the Coke and Pepsi test, and I'll



## BOYS NIGHT OUT

### reviews their new record

### *Make Yourself Sick* (Ferret Music)

This is a reminder: You are nothing more than flesh and blood. You are teeming with urges, instincts, and addictions. This is an exploration into the dark regions of the human unconscious; to a place that most people ignore with every fiber of their being. This is a study of deterioration. This is self-destruction. This is a train wreck. This is our suicide note. Someone call an ambulance. *Make Yourself Sick* is infused with sweeping melodies, laced with murky and macabre pop sensibility. Every song contains an anthem-like, sing-along chorus, and is packed with brilliantly poetic lyrics. This album flows effortlessly from crushing breakdowns, to smooth and haunting acoustic compositions, to poppy radio friendly singles; and the transitions are carried out as smoothly as a pill being slipped into your drink. With a rhythm section providing a powerful, and impressive backbone for the album, there isn't even any need for guitars or vocals, there's enough going on to keep the album on repeat as it is. The entire package of synthesizers, endless and diverse guitar melodies, tortured, infectious vocals, and the completely original and thundering rhythm section, makes this record the quintessential album to own this year. This is important. Philosophy is dead, art is following close behind. This is something to remember. This is everything you've ever tried to forget. This is all bullshit. This is hilarious. This is an inside joke for the dead, dying, and abandoned. You'll find the punch line waiting on your deathbed. **Jeff Davis (Guitar)**



take the metal and metalcore test any day of the week. I'll ace them both every time. The difference between Coke and Pepsi is like night and day. The difference between metal and metalcore isn't as cut-and-dry, but certainly discernable to an acute ear. My ears and I both decree Cannae is metalcore. This is not an insult, mind you, just a fact. Before panties start bunching up by the truckload, Cannae's *Horror* is an album that is more than capable of pleasing fans of the genre—I'll even go further and say *Horror* could please the genre's fuss-buckets. My main gripe isn't the fact that Cannae plays metalcore—hell, I like metalcore, and Cannae's brand of it. My main gripe is *Horror* is under the pretense of an authentic heavy metal album—complete with garish, bloodied female photography—and doesn't represent the band for what they truly are: hardcore kids playing metal. When all is said and done, solos and Sweden's influence well in the fold, *Horror* is worth its weight in long hair and bullet belts. I love heavy metal and metalcore when served well, but I'll never drink a fucking Pepsi. Metalcore is served nicely here. **Evan Fields**



**CATCH 22**  
*Dinosaur Sounds*  
(Victory)

To paraphrase the first line of New Jersey's biggest B-grade ska-punk band, Catch 22, "Won't you please go away, won't you leave me alone." Catch 22's first album, *Keasby Nights*, Victory's respectable attempt to cash in on the then dying ska-punk scene that had ravaged the nation, was very good. Their singer/guitarist at the time, Tomas Kalnoky, wrote great songs—tunes that were catchy, urgent, and fun—that managed to surprise even the most skeptic critics with their undeniably formidable attempt at combining horns with punk rock. Sadly, Kalnoky left the band to pursue school full time (he always seemed like he had a far superior intellect than the rest of these Warped Tour side-stagers), but the band pushed on releasing two bland EPs in hopes of fooling their significant fanbase into thinking there was a place in underground rock for a band that combined ska guitars, trumpets and saxophones, with the kind of pop-punk coming out of New Jersey seven years ago when the Bouncing Souls were bigger than Jesus. After a brand new full length CD that breaks no rules and pushes no boundaries, and employs some of the worst graphic design to come from Chicago's finest hardcore label in recent memory (save for the latest Snapcase release), I think I'm going to take this out of my player and re-play the new Streetlight Manifesto CD. **Ross Siegel**



**CEX**  
*Maryland Mansions*  
(Jade Tree)

I never thought I'd say this about a band on Jade Tree, but Cex takes a page directly from that of Marilyn Manson (which may explain the album's title). This isn't necessarily a bad thing, Marilyn Manson was nominated for a 2004 Grammy Award. But, the unpleasant and chaotic blend of sampled machines and human vocals recalls MM's glam album, *Mechanical Animals*, which wasn't the goth rocker's best. Rlyan Kidwell (who is Cex) is all over the place here. One song is post-industrial, another is reminiscent of early hip-hop. Canada's Bran Van 3000 juxtaposed numerous genres on *Glee* in 1998 and it's not any less strange when Cex attempts to succeed with it six years later. The upside is that despite the fact that this album is bizarre, Kidwell's

vocals are entertaining as hell. **Rebecca Swanner**



**CHRISTIANSEN**  
*Stylish Nihilists*  
(Revelation)

Emo, screamo, hardcore, metal, whatever anyone wants to call them, only one label seems entirely appropriate in describing Christiansen, and that label is "good." Raw and ominous, *Stylish Nihilists* is about as primal and furious as anything out there. With fierce guitars backed by amazing beats, the only thing more impassioned is the vocals of Brandon Bondehagen, who's without a doubt, the last person on the planet anyone should want to get into a screaming match with (FYI: apparently everyone in the band has taken the moniker Christiansen for their last name... kinda like the Ramones). Opening strong and loud with "Kentucky Goddamn," one of the first things someone is likely to notice is that they definitely possess at least a few shades of At The Drive-In. Don't be fooled into thinking that Christiansen is yet another copycat act. If you do, they'll likely dedicate "Dead Celebrities Are Amusing" to you, which is undoubtedly the musical equivalent of calling someone a sissy. Other standout tracks include "The Middle Finger," which contains the altogether brilliant verse "It's the age of electronica/ When you die, I'll be your DJ," and the dance worthy number "Mother Holiday." Without a doubt, this CD is entirely worth the \$11 price tag their label hangs on it. **Dean Ramos**



**CURL UP AND DIE**  
*...But The Past Ain't Through With Us EP*  
(Revelation)

This is the second edition in a two-part EP series, the first being on Status Recordings, both releases housing the only song-titles I've ever heard spelled in Morse code as opposed to the Western alphabet. The end result of this series is great. Epic, droning metal that walks the line between stoner rock bands like Corrosion Of Conformity and a more indie approach to hard music like old Cave In or Converge. The band plays with so much power—their chords are like lead pipes to the head—and their ability to turn their music from an all-out guitar assault to a groovy bass/drums jam is formidable. I wish they would make a third part to this novel. **Ross Siegel**



**DEATH WISH KIDS**  
*Discography*  
(Aerodrome)

I like it. Here's a discography of only two 7" releases. A discography of 11 tracks! Ah well, it makes some sense, as the music inside is a kind of very fast, harsh punk with a female singer whose rasp just might put 95% of female punk singers to shame. It's very well played, almost to the point where it's hard to believe that it's just punk stuff. The only sad point is that, unlike most hardcore/punk that has this much energy, the poor recording quality and muddy mix hurts this pretty engaging band from the mid '90's. Members of DWK are now in Pretty Girls Make Graves, and one even played with Modest Mouse. To be sure, this act sounds *nothing* like the other two. It's not, regrettably, something that most people would appreciate due to the weak production values. The liner notes however, are concise and include full lyrics. An added bonus: it includes a cover of the Vibrators' '77 classic, "Whips and Furs." **du proserpio**



**BLUE SKY MILE**  
reviews their new record  
*Sands Once Seas*  
(Initial Records)

When we were writing this record, we were still a pretty new band (we recorded our EP after being a band for six months) and I think we did a pretty good job of finding a niche song-writing wise where we would fuse the catchiness of bands like Jawbreaker or No Knife with the rhythmic sort of stuff the Police would do. I'm particularly fond of how the two guitars play off of each other in the verses of "Long Drive" and the intro to "Never Say Die." Some of my favorite moments are the little textures that we added like the drum machine on "The Illusion of Shelter," and the organ on "Susan Delgado" add a lot to those songs, without being cheesy or overbearing. Regrets? Mikey programmed in this weird electronica intro for "First Of Many" that we didn't have time to add, and I had some ideas for piano stuff that never made it on to tape. My only complaint about the production is that we should have added more distorted guitar at certain points, like on "Second Impact," the driving part at the beginning could have used some more fullness. Sonically, I'm really into the fact that the production sounds really crisp and well balanced, but without sounding too polished or overproduced and overall, I'm pretty damn happy with it. **(Aaron Fishbein (Guitar))**



**DECIBULLY**  
*City Of Festivals*  
(Polyvinyl)

For a band who rarely go above a whisper, Decibully are remarkably misnamed. Fortunately for this Wisconsin group, which is made up of a whopping seven members, they have a beautifully dreamy sound to back up their claims of musical intimidation. Utilizing a sound that fuses equal parts The American Analog Set, Wilco, and Death Cab For Cutie, Decibully find an appropriate place on the Polyvinyl roster. Their songs are sparse and never intrusive, making this the perfect soundtrack to a quiet dinner or falling asleep (sometimes, the music is so soft one forgets it's even on). Overall, Decibully are a good representation of the indie scene surrounding Chicago, or early '90's Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Good stuff with the second song, "Tables Turn," being the clear favorite. **Ross Siegel**



**DEL CIELO**  
*Wish And Wait*  
(Eyeball)

If there's any band that's most likely to end up on a WB soap or teen movie soundtrack it's Del Cielo. As familiar as the note your best friend passed to you during study hall and as raw as that band that played at last Friday's house party, Del Cielo craft catchy, endearing, and earnest pop/rock songs that really know how to tug at your heart strings. If there's anything that *Wish And Wait* could benefit from it's better production, which would highlight the vocals of the band's abundantly talented frontwoman Andrea Lisi. This is especially evident on "All-Star" and the opener "Full-On Confessional" the former being an otherwise fantastic tune that could stand to be a little bit longer. "Don't Say It's Not Wrong," exudes the feeling of an adapted love letter in song form, and the outstanding and infectious "Five Dollars Wasted," with lyrics about love gone wrong are as raw and exposed as a bloody scab that just won't heal. Simply put, some brilliant stuff here. **Dean Ramos**



**DESERT CITY**  
*SOUNDTRACK*  
*Funeral Car*  
(Deep Elm)

Add me to the list of reviewers who just can't figure this band out. The concept is interesting enough: get a screamo band, build songs around stately piano parts, make sure all the songs are about death... wait a minute, that's not an interesting concept at all. The pattern of mournful, despairing dirges exploding into angrily unproductive, rancor-filled invective gets tired and predictable even when they're

playing it at 11. In fact, it's downright disorienting and almost unlistenable. In case the word "funeral" in the album title didn't warn you about the morbidity of it all, the song titles— which mention hell, drowning, drawn and quartered, dying, casket, and ghost— should serve as another caution; this is not carnival music. The stream of consciousness lyrics are equally irksome. My favorite is "This hibernation is reminiscent of cedar wood." The making of this album was probably very therapeutic for this band, but most prospective listeners will feel nauseous enough to want it to stop well before it's over. Don't bother. **Nick Powers**



**DON ZIENTARA**  
*Sixteen Songs*  
(Northern Liberties)

Don Zientara is mostly known for his day job as the man behind the boards at Inner Ear Studios. There, he engineered every song Minor Threat and Fugazi ever recorded, as well as early work from bands like the Bad Brains, Government Issue, The Dismemberment Plan, and other great Washington D.C. punk outfits. If it's from D.C. and it matters, chances are he tracked it. His production work is a benchmark in independent rock and is instantly identifiable. Who would have ever seen this coming? Zientara offers up 17 (not 16 as the name implies) lo-fi introspective acoustic numbers of just him and a lone guitar, a far cry from the densely layered and well produced tracks he is best known for. The songs are truly minimalist in the fact that in order to achieve such a state one must first be a virtuoso of all the various techniques and practices used in the art form. All theorizing aside, this batch of songs, which were probably recorded on a 4-track Portastudio, are beautifully written and executed with honesty. Completely unexpected yet totally welcomed. **Aaron Lefkove**



**DUKES OF NOTHING**  
*War & Wine*  
(Tortuga)

It's a good thing these Brits were not part of the initial British invasion that occurred when The Beatles set foot on American shores years ago, because the Dukes' frontman Tony Sylvester isn't going to win any fans based on his good looks and fresh scent. And I wouldn't trust good old fashioned beer-soaked rock and roll unless it was played by just such a person (see Lemmy of Motorhead for further proof). The Dukes rip through this disc at a blistering pace, and pull out all the stops on their amphetamine induced *tour de rock* (they even have a song called "God Vs. The Nuge"). I saw these



## BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME

reviews their new record

## The Silent Circus

(Victory Records)

Lately, there has been a lot of debate revolving around the best dishware to use when eating pasta. A lot of people seem to enjoy eating their delicious pasta out of a bowl. I'm more of a plate man myself, but I can appreciate the subtleties that make eating pasta out of a bowl quite enjoyable. One of the main turnoffs of the bowl method is the fact that the sauce has a tendency to collect at the bottom and you can end up with a soupy mess after you are done eating your pasta. This, however, can work to one's advantage if the eater has a sufficient amount of garlic bread to sop up the residual tomato goodness. If you are deprived of the aforementioned bread, then you may want to opt for the plate method, as you will get a more even distribution of sauce to noodle. It's also important to note that with the bowl method, you need one less utensil to aid your consumption. While the plate method necessitates a spoon/fork combo to properly twirl the pasta into a spool of semolina power, the bowl consists of a curvature conducive to solely fork furling fun! Either way, our new record "The Silent Circus" is a lot like pasta. Italians love it! **Paul Waggoner (Guitar)**

guys on Halloween and was accosted by Sylvester, who was trying to complement me on a patch on my jacket. I mistook his drunken rambling and wild demeanor as unfriendly and immediately put up my fists in anticipation of battle, before realizing the nature of his friendly words. Finally someone is putting the sleaze back in rock. All hail The Dukes Of Nothing. **Aaron Lefkove**

## DUVAL

Volume & Density  
(Asian Man)

Smoking Popes fans are in sheer bliss at the release of *Volume & Density*. Josh Caterer's signature songwriting and all too familiar voice is alive and well. Why the change in band name? I don't know and I don't care. Rejoice in Duval and *Volume & Density*. It's everything you could want and expect from Josh and Eli of The Smoking Popes, excluding a nod to Jesus here and there. Hey, nobody's perfect. Popes fans take note: do not pass this up. **Evan Fields**

## ELBOW

Cast Of Thousands  
(V2)

Remember *The Snorks*? Those loveable creatures with the snorkles (hence their name) coming out of their heads? Even though they were blatantly ripping off the Smurfs, I loved them anyway. What does this have to do with Elbow? Well, at first glance, I thought the track listing included "Snorks (Progress Report)," although it in fact says, "Snooks (Progress Report)." Despite my initial disappointment, this album is an intriguing blend of shoegazer rock and driving rhythms, with occasional backup vocals by the London Community Gospel Choir. Elbow could easily be compared to Radiohead, although Guy Garvey's lyrics (who on the aforementioned "Snooks" could be mistaken for Sting) are leagues more romantic than Thom Yorke's. Garvey's lyrics resonate with honesty as they walk the tightrope between sappy and cheesy. Between the soothing piano and Garvey's lush voice, are hints of The Velvet Underground, The Beatles, and a touch of Led Zeppelin. This album is sure to make it onto at least a few best of 2003 lists, and is more fun to listen to than watching reruns of *The Snorks*. **Rebecca Swanner**

## ENSIGN

Love The Music, Hate The Kids  
(Blackout)

On this cover record, Jersey's Ensign bring you 20 songs that have "changed their lives." Production-wise, *Love The Music, Hate The Kids* is great; punk should be raw, fast and far from polished, and this

record is most definitely crude. Ensign is a band that has been around the block (and most of the world, for that matter), and it definitely shows on this record. Acquiring help from members of Avail, Killing Time and the Spook City Choir (a crew of their friends, I'm assuming), the lighthearted fun that should accompany any disc of covers, let alone punk covers, is evident. Unfortunately, for me at least, this isn't enough to carry all of *Love The Music*... My biggest complaint would be the song selection. The bands that are covered are mostly no-brainers. (Bad Religion, Misfits, Bad Brains, SOIA, Descendants, and The Replacements to name a few), but to illustrate my point, instead of a full Bad Brains song, Ensign only records the intro to one, which is disappointing. I guess I could bitch about the song selection on just about any album of cover songs, and for what they've chosen to play, Ensign do them all justice. As they themselves say in their liner-notes, if you don't like *Love The Music*, *Hate The Kids*, then "gather some friends, a basement, and play your own damn covers." **Derek Evers**

## ENTRANCE

Honey Moan  
(Tiger Style)

Talented far beyond his mere 22 years of age, Entrance (also known as Guy Blakeslee) has to have created one of the most appealing and faithful amalgamations of blues, folk, and country music to be heard in quite some time, winning over such esteemed fans as Cat Power and Billy Corgan. Whether it's his uneven, yet angelic wail on tracks like "Lookout!" or the way he handles an acoustic guitar on "Simple Song" (Blakeslee supposedly lacks any sort of formal training and plays his right-handed guitar upside down to compensate for his left handedness), there isn't a single aspect of Entrance's *Honey Moan* CD that seems contrived or false in the least. From the opening title number, to the vintage solitary quiet of the final track, "Sunrise In Belfast/Sunset In Christiana," authenticity oozes from each and every song, especially on the folksy "Careless Love," the foot-stomping, square dance number "Honey Drove," and the down home country style of "Come On In The Kitchen." Constantly receiving heaps of accolades every which way he turns, Entrance is hardly a product of the ever-present hype machine. Instead, he has earned every single note of praise that has ever been thrown his way. **Dean Ramos**

## FIGHTING JACKS

The Dying Art Of Life  
(Tooth & Nail)

Hook-laden, hard-driving, melodic pop-punk tunes are what make up San Jose, CA's Fighting Jacks debut full-length, *The*

*Dying Art Of Life*. Hitting listeners with the immediacy and urgency of a 747, Fighting Jacks sear through track after track of rock and roll gold, starting with the whirlwind of an opener, "Farewell Senator." Immediately following is "Commons And Robbers" and "Some Say," each of which rocks with the same impact as they induce dance floor frenzies. Unfortunately, the band decides to slow things down a bit, losing a significant punch in their music. The first sign of this is the back-to-back snooze fest of "Glass Table" and "Photobook," which are both more or less completely forgettable tracks. Luckily, though, songs like this are few and far between and the band returns to its former state of rock and roll glory with the spine tingling "Your Lurking Shadow" and the electrifying "Unfinished Song." Overall, an entirely solid first effort from a band that is sure to rise from the depths of indie rock obscurity. **Dean Ramos**

## THE FRISK

## THE FRISK

Ransom Note  
(Adeline)

The Frisk will most likely be known as the band that Hunter from AFI moonlights on bass for. It will probably be forgotten that The Frisk, fronted by East Bay punk stalwart, Jesse Luscious (aka Jesse Blatz), formed after Luscious' geek-rock band The Criminals disbanded in 2000. I can't say I've ever been a fan of Luscious' music. From the nihilistic chaos of Green Day contemporaries, Blatz, a band that some will tell you are highly influential (a claim I find dubious), to the dissonant musical irritations of The Criminals—an outfit that did its best to mix The Germs and Bikini Kill—I always found Luscious an ineffectual, boring frontman and the keeper of a voice that could break pane-glass windows. Here we have The Frisk which sees ex-members of the Nerve Agents coming together with members of the aforementioned bands to play a form of punk rock that brings the most moshable elements of old TSOL, X, and the Adolescents together with a sound that wouldn't be too out of place opening for a band on one of the smaller, more out of the way stages of the Warped Tour. If that sounds like your thing then enjoy the feast. As for me, I'm quite content with the fact that The Criminals are no more. I could take or leave The Frisk. **Ross Siegel**

## FU MANCHU

Go For It... Live!  
(Steamhammer)

Here's a double-disc monster from this standby desert/highway rock act (calling it stoner is so 1999, maaaaann). Coming from the classic German label SPV/Steamhammer, who released crucial Euro and U.S. metal throughout the '80's, this record is nicely mixed, with clear instrumentation. Fu Manchu, despite their detractors' claims of always sounding the same, is ever reliable and provide the fat, greasy, bass-heavy rock that they always have. Despite having an affinity for Nebula, a splinter act of FM that moves in a slightly different direction, I've never had a problem with the workman-style that every one of Fu Manchu's records provides. There seems to be more energy here with the faster pace and live feel, even though much on these discs sounds like it could be studio. An exceptional record, and whether you're a convert to this '70's style of heavy garage or new to the genre, this record is a must have for bare-knuckle driving, solid rock, a party or, dare I say it, even a smoke out. **du proserpio**

## FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND

Seven Ways To Scream Your Name  
(Ferret)

Every time I'm ready to decidedly say I don't like this CD, something occurs within one of the songs that doesn't allow me to make that statement. This all-the-current-rage style of melody-driven, sscream then sing, your-adjective-here core is easy to hate. I must say though that Funeral For A Friend has more to offer than the glut of bands "emoting" similarly. Yeah, they scream and sing, and yeah, they have the obligatory breakdowns that collectively plague the current slew of would-be hardcore bands clamoring for mass pop appeal. Even so, FFAF can't completely be lumped in with the pack. In spite of the many "emocore" parallels, there is a definite uniqueness to the band, mainly due to some appealing and noteworthy guitar work. In addition, the sung vocals don't seem as contrived as much as they seem appropriate. This, of course, is disregarding my dislike for vocals that are anything less than massive and brutal. Truth be told, I can't manage to write this CD off just yet—and that is surprising. *Seven Ways To Scream Your Name* isn't what I look for in music *per se*. Nonetheless, it is honest, novel, and more clever and believable than most of the bands I've heard playing this style in the past five years. If Poison The Well floats your boat, Funeral For A Friend will surely levitate it. **Evan Fields**

## THE GITS

Enter: The Conquering Chicken  
(Broken Rekids)

The Gits fall somewhere between the mid-'80's sounds of female-fronted rockers like The Pretenders and the early '90's Seattle grunge movement that indirectly led to bands like Hole. This record, recorded in 1994 and moving in and out of print since then, remains the band's most shining work. The late Mia Zapata had a snarl in her voice that kindred spirits like Kathleen Hannah of Bikini Kill and late-comers like Pretty Girls Make Graves wished they could have achieved. Ms. Zapata's voice was sexy as hell, but at the same time you wouldn't want to fight her. Unfortunately, Zapata was brutally raped and murdered shortly before the recording session wrapped on record (a tragic moment for the music world which spawned the underrated *Viva Zapata!* record by 7 Year Bitch). Thus, the band never had the chance to mature past their grunge rock roots and move on to what would have inevitably been a bright future. Truth be told, *Conquering Chicken* is a bit dated now that we've all heard The Muffs a million times. But remember, you saw it here first. **Ross Siegel**

## GOLDBLADE

Strictly Hardcore  
(Thick)

I wonder what the term "hardcore" will connotate when referring back to the first decade of the 21st century. In the '90's it was a term used to encompass all that was fast, angry, and metal; in the '80's, it was typified by skate punk and bands too hard to be straight-up "punk." So what is Goldblade referring to here with, *Strictly Hardcore*? It's safe to say, that much like the rest of rock n' roll, Goldblade is bringing back the '70's. With songs ranging from Clash-esque anthems to Business-like punk, the band leaves very little to the imagination. Their execution is not the question; they are solid and tight instrumentally, with well-written melodies, choruses, and fist-pumping chants. But,



consistency becomes an issue as the disc labors through all of its 15 tracks. The addition of horns and organs give some of their songs an extra dimension and putting back the funk, soul, and reggae that was once so prevalent in punk and hardcore. One could even argue that they are used too sparingly, and when Goldblade reverts to a stripped-down, rock approach, they become repetitive, derivative and might possibly be biting the Clash a bit too much, ("Living Outside The Capital"). Songs like the funky dance number "Hairstyle," the glam-rock "AC/DC," and the title-track offer up moments of brilliance, but rest assured, you'll be hitting the skip button more than once while listening to *Strictly Hardcore*. **Derek Evers**



**IF HOPE DIES**  
*The Ground Is Rushing Up To Meet Us*  
(Ironclad Recordings)

Freshly signed to Trevor Phipps' (Unearth) new label, If Hope Dies are ready to steamroll over your face. It was difficult for me to write this review being that I could barely keep my hands from shaking as the band's pummeling double bass melted the flesh from my bones. With riffs and song structures that are easily as complex as bands like As The Sun Sets or Fordirelifesake, infused with vocals that might be best described as Jacob Bannon of Converge singing for a death metal band, As Hope Dies are a true killing machine. While the lyrics focus on the largely saddening topic of man's thoughtlessly consumptive nature, they still find it within themselves to sprinkle a few dashes of sarcasm into their song titles ("Sugar, Free Donuts" and "Who Died And Made Us King?"). If you don't believe my claim that this is a fantastic metal record believe my mom, who upon hearing it sarcastically stated, "Oh! This is exactly what I need. It sounds like a car crash!" **Frankie Corva**



**THE INDEPENDENTS**  
*Full Moon Arise*  
(Fast Music)

The Independents are very fond of things like full-moons, necrophilia, graveyards, and coffin-shaped guitars; and they sound like the Misfits crossed with, um, The Misfits. The songs aren't bad, but seriously, the Misfits became a parody of themselves a long time ago, so we really don't need another one. I wonder why Joey Ramone liked these guys so much. **The Turk**



**JEFF OTT**  
*Will Work For Diapers*  
(SubCity)

Jeff Ott has a beautiful voice. His deep baritone, the same voice that drove Bay Area pop-punkers Fifteen to underground fame, resonates with you long after the song stops. I've always enjoyed Ott's voice, yet I've never been a fan of what he has to say. You can imagine then how delighted I was when I got this CD in the mail. Two full discs of Jeff Ott, solo, with just an acoustic guitar. Over the course of two dozen or so tracks Ott proceeds to whine, bitch, and bellyache about how much he hates his landlord. Not only does he hate his landlord, but his mother and sister, who also have the same landlord, also hate him. I don't know how things are in peace-and-love San Francisco, but my landlord drove over at 9 A.M. on a Sunday after my apartment had flooded, got in a car wreck on the way to the apartment, and still fixed a leaking sink without any questions asked nor a single complaint. Does he really deserve the wrath of a

guy like Jeff? Move out dude, quit your bitching! **Aaron Lefkove**



**JOE STRUMMER & THE MESCALEROS**  
*Streetcore*  
(Hellcat)

Less than a year after his untimely death, Joe Strummer releases some of his best work since *London Calling*. At the time of his demise, Strummer was finishing the recording of this album, and the band took it upon themselves to complete what he began. Straddling the line between the punk infused reggae (or reggae infused punk) that he put on the map, and the more mellow and heart-felt sounds akin to Bob Dylan, Strummer & the Mescaleros groove their way through ten songs that hold an equal amount of appeal for 14 year old kids in Rancid T's as they do for barflies who will claim to have seen The Clash in '77 every time "Spanish Bombs" comes on the jukebox. Unlike many aging punks, Joe Strummer's voice and songwriting aged like a fine wine. Rather than turning to vinegar and thus becoming a mockery of his former self, Strummer eased into his fourth decade as an instantly recognizable voice and took his place as an elder statesman of rock alongside Joey Ramone and Iggy Pop. This album is a fitting coda to a career that spanned the squats of 1970's east London to selling out The Meadowlands, touring with The Who, and finally settling into his position as the voice of a generation, or two. **Aaron Lefkove**



**JOHN VANDERSLICE**  
*Cellar Door*  
(Barsuk)

What can you say about John Vanderslice? He has an unfortunate last name. He plays an acoustic guitar. He's not John Mayer (nor is he James Van Der Beek). He's got some wildly inventive styles on his latest, *Cellar Door*. The opener, "Pale Horse," is a marching acoustic stomp held together by off beat snare kicks. Within is a delicate web of horns that sound like they're peaking in the studio window, the Slice (my pet name for him) rallies, "we are many and they are few." Sounds inviting, right? And you think that Vanderslice is the anti-Mayer, all anger and substance. And then the next song "Up Above The Sea" comes on, and it's as if Slice slowed down No Doubt's "Hella Good" to fit his means, banging on trashcans and fuzz bass between melodic interludes. Your head spins around once more and he's Pete Yorn on piano with a darkly mindful ballad in "Wild Strawberries" (as John Lennon would point out, strawberries are the most musical of fruits). You have to respect the Slice—while some solo artists are using the palette of home recording gear to produce the most vile mélange of stolen sounds, Vanderslice makes them gel with a real ear for aura and compatibility. And when the Slice isn't fooling around with Pro Tools, he crafts a pretty acoustic ballad like the achingly personal "My Family Tree" and the equally moribund "June July." Touching songs about a preoccupation with death are so much prettier than bodies that may, or may not, be Wonderlands. **Jonathan Stern**



**JUST A FIRE**  
*Light Up*  
(Asian Man)

I have to confess that I'm guilty of judging a book by its cover. I assumed that these guys were another dime-a-dozen pop punk trio, from the look of them and the fact that they are on Asian Man Records, and I ended up eating my words. Just

A Fire are a trio, but they sound more like Elvis Costello and The Police than MXPX. Although not quite possessing the virtuoso musicianship that the Police had, Just A Fire follow said band's method of simple yet profound bassist and sparse, complementary guitar riffs. Singer and bass player Fred Erskine even mimics Sting's signature gravelly and mumbled vocals. Thought provoking and unique, the song lyrics deal with with such well treaded topics as losing your virginity and disagreeing with the President's politics. The band spices things up by implementing the use of saxophone, trumpet and a little bit of dub reggae. This sure beats listening to Sting's most recent solo releases. **The Goon**



**KEELHAUL**  
*Subject To Change Without Notice*  
(Hydra Head)

Before I ever heard this band play a note I saw their name in a zine and proceeded to walk around for weeks muttering it to myself. I'm not sure why, exactly. I guess the name just intrigued me. Nevertheless, I finally understand why Aaron Turner, his band Isis, his label Hydra Head, and many of the bands associated with it, have a fixation with all things maritime. The ocean and its gyrations, its ebb, its flow, its sheer pressure, are heavy, foreboding, scary, punishing, yet beautiful and hypnotizing, and rest on a foundation of solid rock. Much like many of their peers, Keelhaul play a style of instrumental rock with hints of metal that is all at once, much like the ocean, as dark and dangerous as it is driving. It's like a drunken captain racing his oil-filled barge full speed ahead into icy unknown waters. If you are familiar with Hydra Head you know what to expect. They are consistent in both style and quality on their releases and this is no exception. **Aaron Lefkove**



**KID 606**  
*Kill Sound Before Sound Kills You*  
(Ipecac Recordings)

I've never really been a fan of anything of the electro or techno persuasion. I'd always rather see a band perform before watching a DJ spin records all night. However, just like I'll wear most things from Ben Davis or eat anything made by Bumble Bee, I have always been a fan of brands that I trust, and I trust most anything that's on Ipecac. As a touring club D.J., Kid 606 has earned the reputation as being the Sid Vicious of techno. His newest release only adds

some fuel to his already glowing fire. The twelve fast paced songs fall into the same category as Aphex Twin, Squarepusher, and The Prodigy. Keyboards are combined with everything from reggae and dub samples to chaotic loops and futuristic effects. Although each song is as intense and interesting as the one before, I'm sure Kid 606's live show gives his music more justice than any of his recordings. If you insist on prancing around the room with a glow stick in your hand, then make sure you are listening to this CD while doing so. **The Goon**



**LINK**  
*The Kids Are Alright*  
(Adeline)

If I were Japanese, had a mohawk, and liked The Strokes, this would be my new favorite band. Figure this to be Hi-Standard's Fourth of July barbecue acoustic gig. Quick, poppy, and rhythmically tight, these guys deliver 12 catchy tunes to kick your Chuckie T's to. It doesn't matter that I have no idea what the hell they're saying, or if they're even speaking English half the time. Point is they're having fun and its evident in the music, which breaks all language barriers. If you disagree, I'd eat some sugar, get a translator, and call over some bikini'd, indie-rock chicks before playing this record. **Vinny Panza**



**LIVING SCIENCE FOUNDATION**  
*Last Call For Nightfall*  
(Second Nature)

Spacey electronic drone and haze gives way to whiney vocals that sound androgynous. I think these guys used to be in an emo-punk band. Now they have an organ and loud, thrashy drums and guitars. The music could be semi-cool if they worked on it a bit, but it just remains generic and blurry most of the time. Not to mention the vocals are the most annoying thing I have ever heard. Funny how they put up a bad review on their site to make fun of people criticizing their record and be light-hearted about it. You can put this one up on your site, too. Boys, enjoy your band and your shows. I won't be there to see or hear them, at least until your singer hits puberty, but even that's pushing it. **Brooke Black**



**THE LOT SIX**  
*Major Fables*  
(Tarantulas)



**Roy**  
reviews their new record  
*City Sin And Small Town Redemption*  
(Fueled By Ramen)

I first met Roy during homeroom in seventh grade. Roy wore tight grey sweatpants and claimed that the four stripes on his Adidas tennis shoes were only available in Europe. He was one of those socially inadequate kids that claimed he had the latest video game system or Bo Jackson rookie card, but unfortunately couldn't share any of his precious toys with anyone because they were still in storage. During a homeroom game of intramural kickball, Roy tried to stop me from stealing second base with a bear hug. I eventually broke free from the junior high outcast and "accidentally" punched him in the face. Ever since that seventh grade game of kickball (resulting in numerous lunch detentions), I always cringed when hearing the name Roy. Then I discovered the debut full-length from the band Roy, entitled *Big City Sin And Small Town Redemption* on Florida's Fueled by Ramen record label. Although Roy is comprised of members Botch, Harkonen, and Swedish metal band Deathknight, Roy is a completely different sound compared to the band's hardcore and metal roots. Several ex-hardcore and metal bands often wander down the post-hardcore route, (resulting in whiney "screamo" that kids 13 through 17 absolutely love) but Roy is simply, a good rock band. In a decade where bands are relying heavily on '70's garage rock, and Lynyrd Skynyrd rip-offs, Roy's *Big City Sin...* is a timeless record complete with catchy songs that will make you bob your head and raise your fist. With influences in their songs spanning from Tom Petty, Dinosaur Jr., Wilco, and Guided By Voices, to Crosby Stills & Nash harmonies in their slower and much darker songs, Roy cleverly ties in timeless influences to break the barriers of a rock genre classification. **Mike Cooper (Bass)**



I reviewed an EP by these guys about a year and a half ago and was really into it. The band juggled styles and genres at a breakneck pace and were extremely memorable, if not very catchy. The Lot Six have become the *band du jour* for hip kids to namedrop while hiding behind black-rimmed glasses and size indie-rock-small vintage T-shirts. In the process, the band has forsaken their schizophrenic sound for something more cohesive, accessible, and not much different than many of the other bands out there playing in the same circles. While the songs on this album are extremely catchy and hooky, they are much more ordinary than their contemporaries this time around, losing the uniqueness that initially drew me in. The songs are well played and memorable, and they even do a country song. The Lot 6 are on the cusp of great things, but at the same time they are blending together with all the other bands playing this style. With little to separate them from the next guy they may get lost in the shuffle once the buzz wears off. **Aaron Lefkove**



**LUNGFISH**  
*Love Is Love*  
(Dischord)

I know, I know. Lungfish practically invented emo. They have been making respected art/punk before I even knew what puberty was. But I just don't like this CD. Maybe it's the preachy overtones, spelled out in esoteric lyrics, that seems to dominate independent music here in the nation's capital. I think it's the formulaic approach to this CD that does it: 1. Write two, or maybe four bars of melody, with overly simplistic guitar parts, droning vocals, and very little rhythmic variation. 2. Repeat for four minutes, with no change in mood or dynamics, and incorporate lyrics that will alienate most listeners. 3. Repeat this formula for 10 songs. My roommate, who heard a few songs, suggested that "It's as if they've completely lost sense of why you make music." I was looking forward to giving the thumbs up to a semi-local band, but journalistic integrity prevents me from doing so. **Nick Powers**



**MADBALL**  
*NYHC EP*  
(Thorp)

The ball of destruction is back! After a two-year breakup that saw Freddy and Hoya journey into the unsavory world of hip-hop, they finally got their shit together and realized that they needed to fill the gap that was left in the hardcore scene after their final CBGB's show. Seriously, to all the band's detractors, I saw that show and it was the *most* people I have ever seen in CB's, and probably one of the best

hardcore shows *ever!* This EP is a taste of what these guys are all about, and at only four songs (three new ones and an old classic revamped and sung in Spanish) I can only hope Freddy and Hoya can find time to still tour between nights drinking downstairs at Manitoba's and days playing with their hardcore supergroup, Hazen Street. Fans of Madball will not be disappointed, as this is more of what the band have always done best. There's no variation from the groundwork that was laid down on the band's previous recordings. The "making of" enhanced portion of the CD may even be more entertaining than the music itself. Great work from the last word in NYHC! **Aaron Lefkove**



**MANIC HISPANIC**  
*The Menudo Incident*  
(BYO)

Imagine that you've just been sent a copy of one of your favorite albums, as if it were brand new and hardly heard by people. Yeah, this is by my consideration, one of the best punk albums of the '90's. *The Menudo Incident* is a collection of punk classics (Clash, Wire, Black Flag, Damned, Sex Pistols, Buzzcocks, X, Stooges, etc.) done with a tongue-in-cheek California Chicano style. Yeah, I know what you're thinking, but this record rips with so much reverence and pride that it's not just amusing; more of a new brushing up of material that the band themselves grew up on. Latino members of the Cadillac Tramps make up this act, which would be a saccharine novelty act if it wasn't so damn good. "Garage Land" becomes "Barrio Land," "New Rose" is thus "New Rosa," and "12XU" is sung entirely in Spanish— you get the idea. Unlike the old hardcore novelty act Chicanochrist, they sound like they're totally serious. I can remember the old days when I used to play air-drums to their version of X's "Los Angeles" (which is entitled "East L.A." of course). This album has stuck with me, and now it's easy for anyone to get. **du prosperio**



**MAXEEN**  
*S/T*  
(SideOneDummy)

Wowzers! SideOneDummy reeled in a big fish with this one. Maxeen is the type of band for which major labels sell their souls to the devil. This is definitely a departure from SideOne's bread and butter of acts like Flogging Molly and The Casualties. While Maxeen holds some of the same musical qualities as Jimmy Eat World and Eve 6, the foundation of their music stems from such classic bands as The Replacements and The Police. The songs are pretty much all-out love

themed rock songs. These guys know how to write with depth and substance. Not only can Maxeen write, but they have work ethic too. After forming in summer of 2002, the band had scored a record deal by the fall, and even performed on half of the 2003 Vans Warped Tour. Man, that's what I call being productive... or manufactured. You decide. If they up the pace you will no doubt be seeing them on VH1 in no time. **The Goon**



**MATCHBOOK ROMANCE**  
*Stories And Alibis*  
(Epitaph)

Label wunderkinds Matchbook Romance latched onto the big E with a story that's, well, straight from the storybooks. Word on the street says Epitaph head honcho Brett Gurewitz stumbled upon the band's MP3s online, downloaded 'em, took the quartet under his wing, and brought them to the 'Taph. The act released an EP earlier in '03 with less-than-appealing results. For the first time in a while, Epitaph had introduced a disc (and furthermore, a new band) that wasn't up to par with the "cutting edge" roster the label had been so hellbent in (so successfully) developing. It was hoped *Stories And Alibis* would remedy the sticky situation— and in a small way, it delivers. The Joe Barresi production kicks the Romance into high gear, and in essence, pumps additional artillery behind the act sonically. However, there's still that creepy void in the songwriting department— it's a confusingly generic, aimless, good-enough-but-just-not-stellar vibe, that keeps Matchbook Romance inches behind the rest of the label's roster (and further behind their closest brethren, Hot Water Music). *Stories And Alibis* is definitely stronger and much more enjoyable of a listen than the act's Epitaph debut EP, but it still falls short when all is said and done. Sometimes, it's just not easy wearing the Big E. **Waleed Rashidi**



**MIKE PARK**  
*For The Love Of Music*  
(Sub City)

Mike Park has done it all: founded and operated a wildly successful independent label (yep, the same homespun catalog that gave you the Alkaline Trio), fronted some of the more notable ska-core acts of the '90's (uhhh, Skankin' Pickle for starters) and helped launch successful benefit tours like Ska Against Racism and Plea For Peace (the latter of which merged with Sub City's Take Action event). After the laundry list of positive efforts Park's made for the punk music scene, the man deserves his own solo disc. *For The Love Of Music* features eleven cuts of heartfelt pop-oriented punk-laced tracks, showcasing introspective viewpoints by Park and his thoughts on various social, political and personal issues. But Park's good about not beating the various themes into the ground— his approach is tactful and his musical arrangements are complimentary enough to stand strong on their own. It's a pleasant, worthy listen and best of all, proceeds help benefit Park's Plea For Peace foundation. Now, if he'd only run for president! **Waleed Rashidi**



**MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD**  
*Our Lady Of Annihilation*  
(Trustkill)

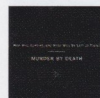
It seems like every time these guys drop a new album they have a new frontman in tow. In keeping with the tradition, *Our Lady Of Annihilation* features the recorded debut of vocalist Rob Fusco, formerly of

One King Down. I've always thought that what set Most Precious Blood, and previously Indecision, apart from their peers was their signature banshee whail vocals on top of breakdowns galore that provide ample fodder for broken noses and missing teeth. Fusco seems to have comfortably settled into his own style, and hasn't tried at all to mimic the screeching of the band's former vocalist, Tom Sheehan. Musically, MPB has broadened their sound, edging away from pummeling floorpunch breakdowns in favor of melodicism and harmony. Don't get me wrong, these guys are still harder and heavier than being broadsided by a Mack truck, but they have taken their music into a noticeably different direction. The results are mixed and threw me for a loop after the first few listens. While fans who latched onto the band's signature sound and screaming may be disappointed, repeated listens made me appreciate the new direction these guys have taken and made me remember why I always thought they raised the bar for hardcore instead of falling just short of it like many of their peers. On top of that, the cover art is some of their best yet. **Aaron Lefkove**



**THE MOVIES**  
*In One Era Out The Other*  
(Gern Blandsten)

Tongue-in-cheek in its approach, solemn in its delivery, *The Movies' In One Era And Out The Other* conveys little or no emotion. Repeated listens will reveal subtle hints of the song-writing ability of principle songwriter Timothy James, though as a whole, *The Movies* show a very limited range. Songs like "Creation Lake" are stark, simple and repetitious, yet like a David Lynch movie, they somehow have the ability to make you feel something... just don't ask me what it is. A mixture of loose-armed musicianship and tight structures give *Era* and overall feeling of lightheartedness— especially when the tempo picks up as in "Scary Footsteps" and "Don't Steal My Licks." It's these brisk moments when *The Movies* succeed the most; with James' Robert Smith-meets-David Byrne voice and organs that sound like they were taken from the nearest hockey rink. It makes for better music when the band doesn't take itself so seriously. Few might know of their hit, "Pass The Music," which, ironically, is *The Movies'* best display of range and melody. "Midnight Bloody Murder" is one example of a slow-tempo success story, and as a rule, the disc gets better as it prolongs the ambivalence, (the last track, "A Better Life," being my favorite). But when all is said and done, it's nearly impossible to care too much one way or the other, and I'm not too sure the band does either. **Derek Evers**



**MURDER BY DEATH**  
*Who Will Survive And What Will Be Left...*  
(Eyeball)

If Cursive and Bright Eyes got drunk on moonshine in a 1920's Georgia speakeasy, and then busted out the guitars and cellos to play some tunes, this is what it would sound like. Maybe one could even dub this southern-emo, or emo-blues, although the latter may be redundant. Clearly Murder By Death are going for a retro-type sound, not too far from what a band like Squirrel Nut Zippers are trying for— although, with very different results. They approach emo unlike any other band in the genre, perhaps less tongue-in-cheek than a lot of other screamo bands who sound alike and look alike. One gets the feeling that unlike the Static Lullabies and Useds of the world, Murder By Death actually draws inspiration from a diverse range

SELF  
REVU



**ARMSBENDBACK**  
reviews their new record  
*The Waiting Room*  
(Trustkill)

This is my review of *The Waiting Room*, our first full-length record. We recorded it in a beautiful eight days at Big Blue Meanie Studios in Jersey City. Of course I'm going to say the record is good, I'm in the band, so consider me tainted. However to be honest, we write music that we personally would love to hear on a record. If it doesn't move us, we get rid of it, so all the songs rock to us. To an outsider, I would say if you like big choruses, soft melodic verses, post-hardcore angst, and a ton of energy, you'll dig it. Add to that a huge dose of inspiration from David Lynch films, especially *Twin Peaks* (jeez how many *Law of Inertia* readers have even seen that show?) and you have Armsbendback. The band was started by me and Mike in my apartment writing the songs and recording in my home studio. I can't express how excited we are to record these songs in a big studio and be able to share them with you. When we recorded, we'd been playing most of the songs for over a year so they were definitely tight. Two of the songs, "Garry Gilmore's Eyes" and "Countdown..." were pretty much written in the studio and happened to work out great. The album's artwork is another David Lynch reference. We just confirmed a tour with Poison The Well (which will be over at the time this is printed) so hope you enjoyed seeing us and are able to check out the album. **Carson Slovak (Guitar)**



of musical and artistic styles—at times rocking out like Cursive after a hangover, or spacey and orchestral like a not-as-pretentious My Bloody Valentine. Their singer, Adam Turla, carries a tortured artist persona. His anguished and stoic vocal melodies—that still remain catchy—and his constant references to drinking an amazing amount of whiskey, he reminds me more of a delta blues musician from the depression-era than a guy who is as comfortable in the spotlight as anyone in the Omaha, Nebraska indie scene (MBD is from Indiana, FYI). **Ross Siegel**



**MY RUIN**  
*The Horror Of Beauty*  
(Century Media)

Picture this: Hatebreed gets kidnapped by the girls and guy of My Ruin. Jamey Jasta, Hatebreed's singer, is coerced into sacrificing his vocal duties to frontwoman, Tairrie B., and then Hatebreed's drummer and guitarists are forced into giving away their secret of creating simple, heavy, and effective hardcore. So long as My Ruin can keep this diabolical plot a secret, it seems like this scheme could potentially work in their favor. All they would have to do is throw in a few melodic segments and some spoken portions and no one would be able to tell the difference. Think again. While they seem to have attempted this formula that I've just stated, they were hardly successful in their efforts. What the band has created is far closer to a sub-par demo from a local metal band than to anything that Hatebreed or even former labelmates, God Forbid has ever concocted. In the band's favor, I can admit that they are in touch with the roots of metal and its potential for tighter, more dynamic songwriting and engaging lyrics. With some work, they may be able to form something out of the uninspiring collage of songs. **Frank Corva**



**NARCISSUS**  
*Crave And Collapse*  
(Abacus)

It's nice to see the metal powers that be at Abacus taking a band like Narcissus under their wings. This Cleveland, OH band has been paying their dues through constant touring and no less than four releases in the past four years. Maybe the title of the fourth track on *Crave And Collapse*, "Rush," was an indication, but like a lot of their peers, Narcissus' sound has become typified by metal's prog roots. Drawing comparisons to bands like King Crimson or Yes, they are as known for their decidedly intricate compositions as they are for their crunchy metal. Unfortunately, while it may be Narcissus' best effort to date, *Crave And Collapse* is plagued by mediocrity. With metal parts that never quite climax into that climactic moment, and high-pitched, melody-less, almost emo vocals that have become commonplace in prog-core, it's almost impossible to not feel as though Narcissus has yet to reach their full potential. They have the talent and prowess to make emotional and brutal metal, just maybe not at the same time. Even still, while *Crave And Collapse* may only hint at greatness, it won't alienate any potential fans. It's time to bust out the Magic cards; prog-rock is cool again. **Derek Evers**



**NEW BOMB TURKS**  
*Switchblade Tongues, Butter-Knife Brains*  
(Gearhead)

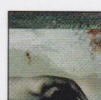
This band has been around for so long and has put out so many records that it's a wonder anyone notices when they release another one. I guess the only reason the

world doesn't forget about them is that, well, they're pretty good! This new album is simply more of what we've always heard from these (so-called) Turks; Dead Boys and Stooges-derived, high energy rock n' roll. The song that really stood out was "Radiobeat," but besides that, it's all pretty much the same-old same-old. **The Turk**



**ONEIDA**  
*Secret Wars*  
(Jagjaguwar)

This CD is full of exactly what you've come to expect from Oneida—two thirds mechanical, kraut-influenced rock, and one third heavy, syrupy stoner metal. As incongruous as that mixture may seem. What's likable about this CD and band is that they relentlessly challenge the listener. I can't imagine seeing them live without having my jaw drop open several times. The off-kilter opener "Treasure Plane" feels like it's skipping a beat, but the pulsing guitars eventually lull you into the rhythm of a great song that you learn to love more with each listen. The stoner songs have a similar hypnotic effect, but with slightly more bludgeoning effect (the closer, "Changes In The City," is 14 minutes long, after all). The problem is that with those songs that remind the listener of German precision-engineered audio chaos, you often are awoken from your coma by jarring, repetitive sounds that don't very well mask the fact that the songwriting is, at times, inane. For my tastes, there are just too many tracks that feel like waking up a few hours after passing out and finding that the music is skipping, all the lights are still on, and there's some really weird shit on T.V. **Nick Powers**



**ORANGE ISLAND**  
*S/T*  
(Triple Crown)

Let's take a moment to think about vanilla ice cream. It tastes good, but it often needs sprinkles or chocolate syrup, and sometimes you just wish there was cookie dough. The same can be said for Orange Island's second full length. There really isn't anything *wrong* with it, but it made me wish the band had done a little more to give it some personality. It's not as if Hot Rod Circuit, Hey Mercedes, and Breaking Pangaea haven't done the same things with their albums. The only difference is that their albums made me want to listen more than once. **Matt Neatock**



**PARK**  
*It Won't Snow Where You're Going*  
(Lobster)

A lot of bands make songs for the broken hearted. Park makes songs for the clinically depressed. Beneath the band's standard melodic sound lies the torment of front man Ladd Mitchell. I don't know who broke Mitchell's heart, but she sure did some damage. *It Won't Snow Where You're Going* gives every heartbreaking detail. "I wish she were here to kiss me and scream dammit Ladd I need you back," a lamenting Mitchell pines on "Conversations With Emily," the disc's fourth track. The rest of the follows suit, from yearning for lost love ("Gasoline Kisses For Everyone") to the desperate feelings that follow ("This Would Be Easier If You Would Just Die"). While I did enjoy this CD, I found it was only tolerable in blocks of three or four songs. For those of you daring enough to listen to it all at once, the contacts for suicide hotlines are listed on the last page of the booklet. **Matt Neatock**



**Sadaharu**  
reviews their new record  
*Anthem For New Sonic Warfare*  
(CI)

Music sounds the same these days. With a few exceptions, bands and labels would rather churn out retreats of what is popular, without understanding their responsibility to add something new and exciting to what currently exists. With *Anthem For New Sonic Warfare*, we wanted to put out an album that combines musical elements in new ways, yet still keep it danceable and fun. Music is rarely fun. Sped-up surf riffs and straightforward stripped down rock parts over top of hand-claps and jazz style drumming, combined with some occasional Sabbath-esque riffing. Perhaps the ingredients themselves aren't unique, but a good cook will put those ingredients together and give you something non-traditional. That's our *Anthem for New Sonic Warfare*. **Jeff Breil (Vocals/Guitar)**



**PAUL WESTERBERG**  
*Come Feel Me Tremble*  
(Vagrant)

I spent a lot of time (and subsequently a lot of quarters) playing "Here Comes A Regular" over and over on a jukebox in a scummy downtown bar and realized Paul Westerberg has a voice that sounds amazing when playing through the shitty speakers of a dive bar jukebox. Paul Westerberg's output has been very hit or miss over the past few years. The last album for Vagrant, the double disc *Mono/Stereo*, released half under the assumed identity Grandpaboy, was a welcome return to form... well half of it anyways. The Grandpaboy songs were sloppy blues rock jams that sounded hastily thrown together, while the songs on the *Stereo* CD were some of his best to date. Grandpaboy did not fail to disappoint once again on his most recent effort for Fat Possum. That brings us to this, a new full length, and the soundtrack to an accompanying documentary based around Westerberg's most recent U.S. tour. The songs are on par with any of his most acclaimed work, yet are hardly reminiscent musically of a certain band that put Minneapolis on the rock map. Westerberg's voice and playing style may have evolved since the early '80's, but his lyrics are still heartfelt and true. I wonder how this would sound after a couple of pints? **Aaron Lefkove**



**PELICAN**  
*Australasia*  
(Hydra Head)

Much like kindred spirits, Isis, Pelican's music has the power to both get you through a back-breaking workout and mellow you out enough to fall asleep at the wheel. Contrary to Isis though, Pelican do their thing completely instrumental. In the world of atmospheric metal, Pelican has taken the ball and ran miles with it, so much so that even the *New York Times* has praised them for lending a little innovation to the art form. *Australasia* is the follow up to their self-titled debut EP. Don't be fooled by the short track listing, this is far from an EP. The Chicago quartet provides you with six songs in just around 52 minutes. Just like fall slips into winter, each song blends into the next. The guitars continually sway from low gear to high, giving each song more parts than a Lego fortress. Pelican's atmospheric metal would be the perfect score to any indie film. **The Goon**



**PIPEDOWN**  
*Mental Weaponry*  
(A-F)

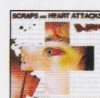
Attention all metal heads: do not be fooled by *Mental Weaponry*'s cover art. Jon Wayshak's illustration of a demonic crucifixion makes Pipedown's latest CD look like a death-metal wet dream. Beneath the evil exterior lurks the

crunchy guitars and chanting vocals that propelled AFI to underground popularity in the late '90's. While vocalist Ian Elliot does a pretty good Davey Havok, he also brings his fare share of ear-piercing screams to the table. Just to make sure Pipedown gives you the finest A-F punk rawk experience, the CD's booklet is packed full of mini-biographies of activists, revolutionists, and philosophers; noted figured such as Buddha, Martin Luther King, and John Locke for you to model your own life after. As long as you're not expecting it to be something it's not, you'll love this album. **Matt Neatock**



**PORTASTATIC**  
*Autumn Was A Lark*  
(Merge)

Mac McCaughan is a busy guy—Portastatic is what he does when he's not running Merge records or fronting Superchunk. That explains why this band, despite existing for a decade, just toured for the first time. This album came from that project and features several covers— "One For The Road," which you'll recognize once you hear it, and not one but two Bruce Springsteen covers. All in all, this CD starts promisingly enough, with five tracks of plugged-in, fun and hook-filled indie pop. These songs are immediately followed by eight tracks of McCaughan alone with an acoustic guitar recorded live on the radio. McCaughan is a great songwriter, but this arrangement just doesn't fit his slightly whiny voice and relatively simple guitar parts. While the last three of these acoustic bonus tracks come closer to achieving the desired effect, the unfortunately poor recording quality on the first five clinches your loss of interest before you even get that far. **Nick Powers**



**SCRAPS AND HEART ATTACKS**  
*Still Sick*  
(Triple Crown)

It seems like these days in order to be a successful band you have to have a long name with the first letter of each word making a catchy acronym. It worked for From Autumn To Ashes (FATA), Taking Back Sunday (TBS), and Give Up The Ghost (GUTG) who's old acronym, AN, just wasn't cutting it). Scraps And Heart Attacks (SAHA), who were formerly known as The Heist, have got more than just a cool name going for them. This Long Island group plays their own brand of high-speed, old school hardcore that refreshingly lacks the politics and moral obligations that most other bands are so gungho about as of late. The vocals are raw and energetic and never fall below a scream. The riffs are simple but brutal, and the beats are straight ahead but not so much so that they get boring. If you're looking for gimmicky fashioncore or super technical metalcore then you're going to have to look elsewhere. From the opening drum fill in "Queen Of Prussia" to the final breakdown in "Don't F With S," *Still Sick* is



a reminder that hardcore is supposed to be about having fun and causing trouble, not learning or boring stuff like that. I give this record a few bonus points for having a really pretty di-cut layout. We love that kind of stuff here at *LOI*. **Stan Horacek**



**SELFMADEMAN**  
*Daylight Robbery*  
(Smallman)

Music of the proletariat doesn't really have a use for metaphors. Think of the great labor strike songs like, "Hell No, We Won't Go," or "Better Wages, Less Work." And of course "Workers Unite" is pretty straight forward, and that's Selfmademan's *raison d'être* on *Daylight Robbery*. They play politically charged Canadian power-pop—making for the first out-and-out protest record whose politics you don't care about or understand (socialized medicine... huh?). And speaking of misunderstood, you'll find that just like in Canada, this album is required to be in both national languages of English and French. Or at least one song "Le Dernier Argument Des Rois" which loosely translated might mean, "We Like At The Drive-In." Of course, if you've ever been to their hometown of Montreal you'd realize there's a lot to be angstful over. First of all they put mayonnaise on everything, they speak this bastardized version of French, and don't even start with the unearthly temperatures. I guess my friends and I were looking for strip clubs rather than abandoned factories that were the result of hyperglobalization. But, bless these Ontario boys for being committed to raising social awareness of political apathy, by mercilessly hammering home the point that government is evil and people are good. "Free trade zones, food not war/against the government, the wars they plan/against the subjugation of poverty..." demands lead singer Jay. And who isn't against these things? (Note: if you are against these things, skip to the next review). **Jonathan Stern**



**SNAPCASE**  
*Bright Flashes*  
(Victory)

Arriving as yet another installment of their seven record deal with Victory, Snapcase is back with a few B-Sides from the *End Transmission* sessions, and a few unexpected covers. The mindset of this album is similar to that of fellow veterans Pennywise, NOFX, and Sick Of It All: stick to the same old song and dance, include some slightly progressive elements, but always give the audience what they are expecting. All the familiar elements one would expect are present on this album. A slight dash of spice is thrown into the mix on tracks like "Makeshift Tourniquet" where electronic beats are dropped into the mix, yet are by no means necessary.

After giving their cover of "Mountain Song" a good listen or two, I concurred that if any hardcore band should be covering Jane's Addiction, Snapcase is the prime candidate. While Daryl's vocals lack the tonal quality to hit the notes square on the head, he makes up for it in the sheer attitude and emotion poured into the lines. The two Devo covers, and they are, at best, a stretch for the band, but are done with a massive amount of Snapcase flavor. In all honesty, if *End Transmission* did as little for you as it did for me, this is not the album for you. **Frank Corva**



**SOILED DOVES**  
*Soiled Lives*  
(GSL)

Enter Blood Brothers lite. Featuring Blood Brother Johnny Whitney's trademark soprano biales, Soiled Doves is hashish, compared to the crank-fueled Brothers' tuneage. And it isn't very fun or engaging, as it's the blazing fast tempos of the Blood Brothers that make their angular punk so combustible in the first place. The Brothers are like running over blazing coals barefoot, whereas Soiled Life feels more like an aborted walk through the park with an amputated leg. Recommended only as the first step to recovery after the initial over-exposure of the Blood Brothers. Otherwise, just file in the piles of everything else too edgy for its own good. **Waleed Rashidi**



**SOME ACTION**  
*S/T EP*  
(Gigantic Music)

It is now time for New York City to give up it's best kept secret: Some Action. This is some real live New York City rock and roll (not like the stuff found on the latest Radical Records comp.), with everything you could ever ask for: Dead Boys sexism, Joneses swagger, Saints attitude, and Pagans punk rock. This five-song EP is short, to the point, and perfectly recorded. The band's live show is unparalleled, Stooges-inspired raw energy and chaos. This is what is happening in New York City *right now*— get this EP before Some Action becomes a household name. It's gonna happen pretty damn soon. **The Turk**



**SSION**  
*Opportunity Bless My Soul*  
(Version City)

Holy crap! This band *rules!* This band is the whole package. Crazy art-collage videos, costumes, dances... I love SSion and I want them to be huge. Call your mom, this group of art students from Kentucky have gone and fucked things up for music. It was a much needed kick in the ass and with any hope they will get the

recognition they deserve. Performance art meets fuzzed-out keyboard, frantic, scratchy vocals, and drums. The main instrumentation sounds like it was done with a rhythm sampler on that keyboard you got for Christmas when you were eight. With all this erratic shouting and yelping, it's no surprise they thank the Liars, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, and Black Dice in the liner notes. From the extras, a live video and some artsy mishmashes (my personal favorite being "Call Out Our Lions"), you'll realize this band is meant to be experienced visually, not just on record. Once you get the whole picture you'll realize that SSion are worth getting to know. **Brooke Black**



**STATISTICS**  
*Leave Your Name*  
(Jade Tree)

This would be great music to get stoned to. Not entirely dissimilar to electronica from the early '90s, Statistics' psychedelic booty-shaking rock is so ethereal at times that it's like trying to grab fog off the ground. Slipping through your fingers, it refuses to congeal into a substance you can cup in your palm. The songs on *Leave Your Name* move much like a heavy frontal fog, flowing so seamlessly that the album feels like one long symphony punctuated a Denver Dalley's (of Desaparecidos) occasional guitar wail, and Mike Sweeney's (of Bright Eyes) hi-hat. Hugging close to the ground with the mood of a misty morning, Statistics' debut album isn't warm and fuzzy, but eerie and melodic. It's a moody companion to your morning coffee. Your coffee's lonely. It told us when you were eyeing the half and half. **Rebecca Swanner**



**STICKS & STONES**  
*The Strife And Times*  
(Chunksaah)

The idea of a discography sure has changed in the past ten years. I think the first one I'd heard of was the Minor Threat discography. Now, it's an indispensable tool to muscle some attention for a band that may not have broken the surface, or a way for a band to make available their long lost back catalog to a younger generation. The name Sticks And Stones rings a bell very vaguely but I know this is the first time I've heard this band. A NJ act that was active from '87 to '95, Sticks And Stones hit me with an immediacy and raw emotion that I don't hear too often. They played a very natural style of punk rock that is as much Clash as it is Replacements, with a vocalist that clearly poured his heart (and larynx) into these songs. In fact, I'd say the first thing that hit me about the vocals was that the Bouncing Souls definitely had been influenced by these guys— hell, it's on their label! The liner notes, while talking about how they're not sure if anyone ever got them, have to be among the best I've seen. Sticks And Stones are certainly a unique act, and I don't know if they're going to be for everyone. I am nevertheless sold, as this band's obvious emotion dragged me in. That, and their cover of one of my favorite Dead Kennedy's tracks, "Moon Over Marin." This needed to see a release, no doubt. **du proserpio**



**STYLEX**  
*Auto Focus*  
(Action Driver)

This Bowling Green, Kentucky foursome play electronica to levels Cursive and The Faint have the good sense to stay away from. A lot of what happens on *Auto Focus* is so futuristically structured that it sounds almost dated. OK, make that very

dated. But there is hope. Lead vocalist Dustin Hostetler slips his unorthodox vocals about communication, and what seem to be on-the-job annoyances, over a steadily more appealing arsenal of synthesizers. Halfway through the record, Hostetler, guitarist Joel Roberts, bassist Brian Kantorski, and drummer Jeff Loose are fully limbered with "Paragraph" and "The Best News," which deliver the worthiest moments on the album. Even with the oeuvre of Stylex steeped in the principles of glum living, their delivery makes it all seem so cheery. **Sean Moeller**



**TED LEO**  
*Tell Balseary, Balseary Is Dead EP*  
(Lookout!)

Even at his worst, Ted Leo is still a more charismatic, charming, and dynamic performer than most others. While the emo fad is criss-crossing the nation these days, Ted Leo is playing the same music he's been playing for the better part of the last decade—and it's still great stuff. Musically, Leo is two-parts The Jam and one-part The Who. The end results on his last two Lookout! records, *The Tyranny Of Distance* and *Hearts Of Oak*, are fantastic. On this recording, however, I suspect Leo had some time on his hands, a recording budget, and some cover songs (by the likes of the Jam and The Pogues) that he wanted to commit to tape. The only problem is that the songs, most of which are done solo— just he and a guitar— sound crude, not as polished as they do when he plays with a full band. The title track, on which he has accompaniment, is fantastic, but I fear we've heard this one before. The rest are not up to the very high par Leo set for himself during his Chisel days. **Ross Siegel**



**THOUGHT RIOT**  
*Sketches Of Undying Will*  
(A-F)

The guys at A-F records should be given a grant to start their own civics department at some small, liberal university. Apparently, their bands know a hell of a lot more about government policy than anyone in the punk scene. With that, they should also be elected to an ethical advisory board so that they can teach us more about the decadence of the white race and malevolence of anyone and everyone who earns more than \$30K a year (read: rich people). On their prestigious staff, aided by guest lectures from Strike Anywhere, would be polit-punk aggressors, Thought Riot. Their melodically driven, forcibly anthemic tunes will have Crass fans shaking the dirt out of their dreads as they claw over each other in the hemp-stenched pit of knowledge. Danceable and catchy as they are at times, overly-clickéd, preachy lyrics mixed with cookie-cutter screamalongs will cause many apolitical, punk-core enthusiasts to drop their classes. If you dig their friends' bands (Good Riddance, Pipedown, Anti-Flag, etc.) you'll probably enjoy hearing how well they've managed to plagiarize them all. In the meantime, I'm going to go sign up for classes at my buddy Stan's college, FBU— Facebreaker University. **Vinny Panza**



**THUNDERBIRDS ARE NOW!**  
*Doctor Lawyer Indian*  
(Action Driver)

I want to see Thunderbirds Are Now! perform live. I don't want to listen to their record. Well, not very often. It's far from bad, but goddamn if these lunatics wouldn't be show of the year material

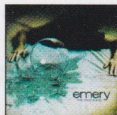
**SELF REVIEW**



**THE PALE**  
reviews their new record  
*Gravity Gets Things Done*  
(SideCho)

I can tell you what we *didn't* want this record to sound like: R. Kelly. That guy is ridiculous. So is Chingy. What we really wanted was to distance ourselves from all the comparisons we've gotten in the past. Honestly, I don't think we sound anything like Clay Aiken or Shania Twain anymore. Actually, none that was true. Except for the R. Kelly part. That guy is still really, really ridiculous. *Gravity Gets Things Done* is our third record, but in many ways it feels like our first. It's the first to get nationally distributed and the first that we've really wanted everyone to hear. What we were aiming for was an honest record with depth, something that would measure up with our favorites. If it had a fast song, it would need a slow spacious song to rival it. If a song had happy music, it would need gut-wrenching lyrics. I think that's what we did, though when you're in a band you never feel completely satisfied with it, that's why you keep making records I guess... you never feel done. All in all, we came up with was a 12-song indie rock record that we're really proud of, and we always love playing the songs live. I think we also succeeded in making it non-ridiculous, because ridiculous records are dumb. **Greg Swinehart (Drums)**





## EMERY

reviews their new record

### *The Weak's End* (Tooth & Nail)

*The Weak's End* is a collection of songs written over a year and a half by several different collaborative efforts. The theme consistent throughout is that we are weak people, weak in our relationships and convictions. Out of our fickleness comes all the problems and inspirations of our songs. The hardcore screaming and breakdowns come out of desperation and sadness, not anger or frustration. We think that *The Weak's End* is a hard record, and is intended to be, but only in the moments when our emotions are pushed to the limit. It exudes an overall feeling of being beautifully sad, and at the same time is very pretty. It feels like you want to cry, but are happy to do so. Like this contradiction of feelings, the hardcore parts are simply a temporary release of intensity. Even though the record deals a lot with weakness, we hope to give off an overall impression of love and perseverance over hardships. Ed Rose did the recording and taught us a tremendous amount about being good musicians and concise songwriters and arrangers. It was completed in two weeks, and we were happy to be able to add keyboards and extra vocals as heavily as we did, making the sound enormous. To us, the record points to something outside of the CD. It makes us think about our inward selves and our place in the world. We hope other people will get more out of it than merely listening to the trendy sounds of a band like us. **Toby Morrell (Vocals/Guitar)**

when the lights go down and a room full of fans awaited. It would put anything they've ever recorded to the dirtiest of shames. Fuzzed-out vocals that could make The Strokes' Julian Casablancas furiously jealous, Ryan Allen's interesting singing pushes the band past the line in the sand where gibberish begins and cohesion ends. The energy and experimental leanings leave fellow spazz-outs The Liars with dust in their teeth, and rivals that of Michigan's Whirlwind Heat. **Sean Moeller**



## TRISTEZA

### *Espuma EP* (Gravity)

A truly remarkable album; if not for its lush production and soundscapes, then merely because it was able to keep me listening so attentively despite its lack of vocals and slow tempo. Tristeza have long been one of the more unappreciated bands in the indie-rock scene. Earlier this year guitarist Jimmy LaValle left the band, and consequently, *Espuma* consists of live and previously unreleased tracks with the exception of "This Trap", which is the band's first song since LaValle's departure. The music throughout *Espuma* is comparable to live instrumental dub. Lusciously produced, the bass, without ever becoming overbearing, is so thick and supple you could almost eat it. In fact, all of the rhythm is pushed to the forefront with the exception of the fifth song, "Living Stains," which, while full of rhythm, is led by guitar and keys that have been fed through a spacey effect. "Enchanter," and "Living Stains" offer a good summary for the entire disc and are also, in my opinion, the two best songs. "Enchanter" is your much more typical dub track, relying on repetitive bass lines, a steady continuous drumbeat, and the keys supplying the melody. "Living Stains" remains true to their guitar-rock format. Surprisingly, though recorded at various times, *Espuma* is remarkably cohesive. The whole album leans toward ambient mood music—the kind you put on to be listened to in the background—but a quick listen will not do this record justice. You might even have to throw on the headphones to hear all the brilliance *Espuma* has to offer. **Derek Evers**



## UNDER A DYING SUN

### *Supernova* (Substandard)

Imagine the not-so-distant past. Picture a dark room—not much bigger than a living room—packed with skinny 20-somethings, who are almost as pale as the cigarettes they are smoking. Forearm sleeve tattoos

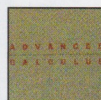
are almost as plentiful as dyed black hair and nerd glasses. There are no 13-year-olds, no Good Charlotte T-shirts, and no big time radio station sponsors to be found. This is what listening to Under a Dying Sun's *Supernova* feels like. So what does it sound like? Think mid-'90's indie rock meets Converge. Ringing, unpolished guitars are joined with sincere, but incredibly average, vocals, to remind us of what emo sounded like before the word (and the genre) became an insult. Your nostalgic side may end up being more fulfilled than the part of you that actually likes good music, but this one is worth picking up. **Matt Neatock**



## UNSANE

### *Lambhouse* (Relapse)

There was a time when you couldn't walk down the streets of New York's Lower East Side without spotting at least one Unsane T-shirt. Notorious for their brutal live shows and murder scene themed artwork, Unsane were one of the pioneers of noise-rock that came out of New York City in the late '80's and early '90's. The band often shared the bill with, and in many cases blew off the stage, bands such as Helmet, Sonic Youth, and Orange 9MM. Although recently reunited, the trio hasn't released any new material since 1998. *Lambhouse* is a collection of songs that chronicle the band's fifteen-year career (together since 1988 with their last release being in 1998). The twenty-four track CD is a well-balanced sampling of songs from each of the group's Relapse, Matador, and Amphetamine Reptile releases. Five of the twenty-four songs are from their breakthrough release, *Scattered, Smothered, & Covered*. To catch an Unsane video, you would have to tune in to *120 Minutes*, the now defunct late night MTV show that featured underground artists, and pray that you might catch them sandwiched in between Beck and Pavement. The DVD which is included as the second disc of this set features the band's four videos along with live footage that spans from 1992 to 1999. If you are in your mid-twenties and are desperately seeking music reminiscent of adolescence, you need this for its nostalgia. If you're in a metal or grind band, you need this for educational purposes. **The Goon**



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### *Advanced Calculus* (These Bricks Are Mine)

From the 28 tracks on this extremely diverse compilation, it's obvious that Pittsburgh has a whole hell of a lot more

going for it then the Steelers, Pirates and the late Mr. Rogers. These songs, recorded in the studios of one of the few remaining free-form radio stations in the United States, represent demented jazz (Zombi and Young Steele Matula Trio), top-notch hip-hop (Strict Flow), Dischord-like math rock (Creta Bourzia and Mihaly), pure punk (Teddy DuChamp's Army) and any other musical form you could circle from a list as thick as a J.C. Penny's catalog. One of the finest songs in the two-disc set, Life In Bed's Braid-inspired "Throwback," deals with emotional insecurities. You've got another group solving them in Weird Paul's "Human Eye," where he buys his eye-patch wearing lady friend a real eye for her empty socket. Truly something for everyone. **Sean Moeller**



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### *A Santa Cause: It's A Punk Rock Christmas* (Immortal)

Twenty of your favorite pop punkers have come together to bring you their version of *Now That's What I Call Christmas*. You may never hear Justin Timberlake say a bad word about the fat man in the red suit, but wait until you hear what New Found Glory, Something Corporate, and Blink-182 think about the most wonderful time of the year (let's just say they're getting coal in their stockings). While the album does take a few jabs at the holidays, it also includes covers of Christmas classics like Matchbook Romance's "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and In Memory's "The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year," as well as a few new holiday songs like MXPX's "Christmas Night Of Zombies." A *Santa Cause* may not be a *Chipmunk Christmas*, but it could be a good change of pace from the elevator music they play at the mall. **Matt Neatock**



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### *GIMME SKELTER* (Buddyhead)

If you don't know about Buddyhead and their relentless crusade against Fred Durst, please go to their website—you will certainly agree with some of their rants before you get tired of them. If you don't know Buddyhead's taste in music, well think lots of garage punk (the kind that's not on MTV), with occasional forays into heavier metal/experimental/psychedelic fare. This comp is a nice little coup for this label because they got big-name yet similar-minded bands like Mudhoney, Primal Scream, Wire, Cave In, and Weezer to contribute tracks. It's narrated by Iggy Pop, for fuck's sake. For my money, the best tracks are "Hard On For War," the Mudhoney song that points out that warhawks send us to battle to thin out the competition for getting laid. "You Won't Get With Me Tonight," the Pinkerton-era lost Weezer track that belongs on any Weezer album except *Pinkerton*, is surely another highlight. The album finishes with an 8-minute interview of Mr. Pop by Nardwuar, an annoyingly comical media guerrilla from Canada. Of course, the five Buddyhead artists are pretty much lost in the shuffle, or maybe they just blend in well. While I'm not sure what to make of the cover art (Charles Manson), the music here, and the occasional anti-consumerism sentiment that loosely ties this comp together, are definitely worth listening to. **Nick Powers**



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### *PUNK GOES ACOUSTIC* (Fearless)

The third installment of Fearless' famed *Punk Goes...* compilation series, *Punk*

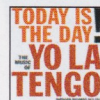
*Goes Acoustic* finds normally plug-in-and-crank-it-to-eleven acts like Thrive, Rise Against, Finch and Coalesce unplugging and re-tooling their songs for this lighter affair. The Ataris' "Eight Or Nine," finds vocalist Kris Roe in top form, "Knew It All Along" from Midtown is a stellar cut, but Rise Against's "Swing Life Away" comes out as the surprise slugger, and features the backing vocal talents of Descendents/ALL drummer Bill Stevenson. There are a few sore spots within the compilation's 20 tracks (none of which are really worth mentioning), but as a whole, *Punk Goes Acoustic* proves that screaming, blazing punks know how to turn it down just as well as they can crank it up. **Waleed Rashidi**



## THE WORKING TITLE

### *Everyone Here Is Wrong...* (Redemption)

Blind with a side of bland, anyone? As capable musicians as the players in The Working Title are, their music is just far too middle of the road for anyone under 40 to appreciate. Seriously, this is the kind of disc that someone would pick up at the local Wal-Mart, a retailer which regularly sells processed and packaged sincerity like *Everyone Here Is Wrong*. They would sell it under the guise of Matchbox 20 and Third Eye Blind, but it's all the same stuff. And while said retailer has gotten flack for selling firearms to kids in the past, their reasoning is now perfectly clear; after purchasing and listening to discs by such bands as The Working Title, the first compulsion is to take a shotgun to your stereo. It's like they asked a radio program director his advice on how to create the least offensive and most commercially viable product to sell to suburban soccer moms like the one on *7th Heaven* and followed said advice to a T. Isn't that supposedly how such contemporary artists like The Calling got their start? What? The Calling doesn't ring any bells? Big surprise. **Dean Ramos**



## YO LA TENGO

### *Today Is The Day! EP* (Matador)

Every time I listen to Yo La Tengo, I kick myself for not listening to them more. That is certainly the case with this EP, in which YLT took the time to pack in as many of their musical hats as they possibly could. The first three songs make frantic, noisy, power pop sense. Then, immediately on the heels of the mystical, horn-driven chaos of "Outsmartener," Georgia and the boys send you reeling with a simple but hauntingly beautiful cover, "Needle Of Death." A shimmering instrumental ode to late-'60's tambourine and organ pop bands follows, before closing, as they opened, with a doctored version of another of their songs. Where the version of the title track here added a beat and rawness that the original version lacked, they strip "Cherry Chapstick" bare of the poppiness it embodied on the more famous first outing, and instead present a sweet acoustic ballad. All in all, this is a very solid effort that YLT diehards will no doubt enjoy, but that is also accessible enough to pique the interest of first-time listeners. Did I mention that they name drop Charlie Sheen's dad? **Nick Powers**



# HOME TOWN HEROES

## If Buddah Had a Tech-Nine



**S**teve Alcairo is a gun enthusiast and manager of Jacksons Arms indoor range and gun store in South San Francisco. He is also a practicing Buddhist, an artist, and a one time private bodyguard for celebrities like Bill Cosby. He drives a 1968 Chevy Malibu.

### How did you get into guns?

My father had a shotgun, and he would leave different parts around the house, and I would go looking for them. My Mom was getting nervous so she asked my uncle to talk to me about guns. My Dad and my uncle are Vietnam vets. So my uncle loaded the gun and let me shoot it. The plan was for the

shotgun to knock me on my back so that I'd never want to touch it again, but I managed to shoot it, and shoot it well.

### How old were you then?

About eight or nine years old. That was the first time I shot a 12 gauge shotgun.

### So you kept practicing?

I went to Woodrow Wilson High School and we had a rifle team. There was a shooting range below the gym.

### Was that safe? Wasn't that was kind of a thugged-out school back then?

It wasn't like that in the class. There was no live ammo for the 1<sup>st</sup> semester.

### With all this experience, how good are you at shooting?

I'm pretty good. I've won classification as "Distinguished."

**Imagine someone was shooting at us from my car over there (I point to my 1989 Plymouth Acclaim about 25 yards away) what would you do?**

First I would push you to the ground and then fire a couple rounds.

**How many shots would it take for you to get him?**

Three shots, two in his chest, one in his head.

**Have you ever been shot at?**

Yeah, once. I was shot at leaving high school. They had confused me for someone else.

**What did you do?**

I took cover behind some garbage bins, and kept moving. I knew what they had, and I could tell they didn't have much experience with guns.

**How could you tell that while you were being shot at?**

They were in a moving vehicle, they were excited. I could see how the guy was holding the gun, like this (he holds his arm out and twists his fist so his knuckles face down, a la *Menace II Society*).

**Did getting shot at influence you to become more interested in guns?**

No. It just showed me how crazy our school was.

**So what was it like working as a private bodyguard?**

It's all about discretion. If your first reaction is to reach for your gun, you're a loser.

**What kind of people were you looking after?**

I can't really say... self-made millionaires, people that request security because they've received death threats.

**Who was the coolest person you ever guarded?**

Bill Cosby, he's the coolest guy on the planet.

**How do you respond to critics of gun violence and people who want more gun control laws?**

If someone wants you dead, they'll kill you. They say last year there were 3,000 deaths caused by guns, but you know what, if it wasn't a gun, it would be 3,000 kitchen knives. I still think it takes a lot to look down that barrel and kill somebody. I'm a Buddhist, and when I decided to come work here and be involved in this, I talked to my monk about it. And he said as long as you are going to only draw that gun for self-defense, then it was okay.

**What is your eventual goal?**

I want to have a family, settle down here in San Francisco. My true passion is art. When I punch out, I go into the art studio and just start cracking. I'll be in there for about three, four hours.

**How did you get into that?**

I used to draw and doodle a lot. 90% of the kids in my high school were hip-hop fans, so I would just try to copy anything. All of a sudden people were like, "Damn, Steve knows how to draw." And they'd give me lunch money if I copied something

onto their backpack or whatever. I put up big pieces too. Crocker Amazon, Silver Terrace Park (San Francisco parks). I would never put my name or anything, just bam, do it and gone.

**Is there any relation between art and shooting?**

Attention to detail.

**I've got to ask, did gun sales pick up a lot after September 11<sup>th</sup>?**

We sold more guns in three weeks after September 11<sup>th</sup> than one year combined. Anything that went bang.

**Do you ever not sell a gun to someone because they seem shady?**

There are people who come in here saying, "I want a gun that can shoot as many people as quickly as possible." And I'll say, "You know what, I think you need to go someplace else to find that gun." A firearm does not empower you as an extension of law enforcement.

**Who is your average customer?**

It varies. We had a guy come in here and buy a \$3,000 handgun. Turns out he was a retired IRS guy. You have some guys who are hell bent on wanting to shoot people. They dream about being the one to save their neighborhood, being the one to shoot Saddam Hussein, being the one who shoots the guy who hijacked the planes.

**All right, finally, what are your favorite guns?**

I like long guns, but it depends. I just want a gun that can do the job. Instead of it being a lengthy street battle, I want it to be pop, pop and your done. I dread the day I have to shoot somebody, but if I do, I want to do the job right.

After the interview, we went to the range for a little target practice. Using the 9mm Glock that Steve keeps on his person while managing the store, he hollowed out a circle in the center of the paper target. After instruction, it was my turn. I clasped the handgun, and looked over the top of the gun through the site. I paused to focus, and felt something surging inside me. Was it adrenaline, power, fear? I pushed those thoughts out of my head and focused again. You can't be conceptual, you can't think about killing people. I just wanted to do the job right. Pop, pop. Two direct shots to the chest. I emptied the rest of the clip with glee. ■

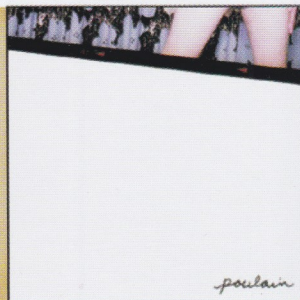




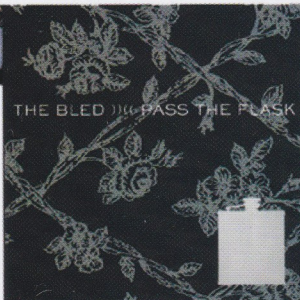
# What's in a Name?



RECOVER  
'CECI N'EST PAS RECOVER'  
CDEP



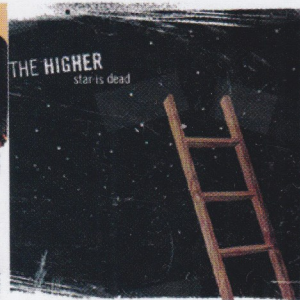
POULAIN  
'FOR PASSENGERS'  
CDEP



THE BLEED  
'PASS THE FLASK'  
CDLP



SALEM  
'LOVE IT OR LEAVE ME'  
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# COHEED AND CAMBRIA IN KEEPING SECRETS OF SILENT EARTH: 3

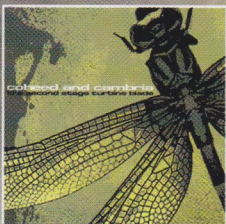
"THE NEW GENERATION" - LA TIMES

"INTRICATE" - ROLLING STONE

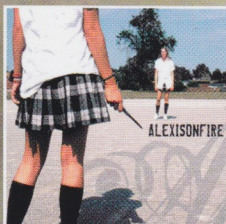


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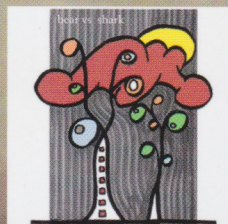
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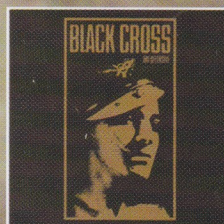
COHEED AND CAMBRIA  
THE SECOND STAGE...  
EVR67 CD



ALEXISONFIRE  
S/T  
EVR89 CD



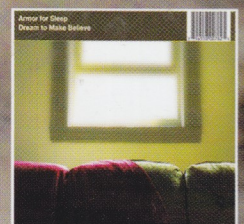
BEAR VS SHARK  
RIGHT NOW YOU'RE...  
EVR85 CD



BLACK CROSS  
ART OFFENSIVE  
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GIVE UP THE GHOST  
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